

EVOLUTION IN ITALIAN ART

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EVOLUTION IN ITALIAN ART



Madonna and Child
from the painting by Giovanni Bellini
in the Academy Venice



EVOLUTION IN ITALIAN ART

BY

GRANT ALLEN

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FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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“Evolution in Italian Art” was practically complete at the time of the author’s death, but its chapters have been revised and brought up to date in the light of recent knowledge and research, by Mr. J. W. Cruickshank.

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INTRODUCTION

GRANT ALLEN, who has been described as naturalist, anthropologist, physicist, historian, poet, novelist, essayist, and critic, in the following pages applies his versatile mind, the mind of an expert in natural science, to kindred problems in artistic method. He was not a specialist in the criticism of pictures, yet a trained power of observation and a mind sensitive to life in all its aspects, gives interest and point to his attitude. He had the sympathetic imagination of a born teacher; he was also a constant learner, and the fact that he was not professionally a critic of art, brought him in some ways nearer to the student, and enabled him to understand the difficulties of the beginner.

The present series of papers appeared originally in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *English Illustrated Magazine*. They were based on observations made in Italian and other galleries, during many journeys arising from the sad necessity of spending winters abroad on account of ill-health. Many years before these journeys were undertaken, preparation for such studies had been made in an investigation into the physiology of aesthetics, a treatise published in 1877. The treatment of the present subject was not intended

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as an authoritative criticism, it was rather a carefully planned suggestion to help those who desire to have some clue in the study of such a complex thing as Italian art.

The object of this introductory chapter is to suggest in brief outline some of the forces affecting the painters of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, so that the reader may be assisted to place Grant Allen's detailed examination of the subjects in a general view of the period.

§ 1. EXTERIOR INFLUENCES AFFECTING ITALIAN ART

These were mainly three in number—(1) Byzantine art of Constantinople, predominant between the sixth and twelfth centuries. (2) French art, powerful throughout the latter part of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. (3) Classical art.

(1) *Byzantine Influence*.—The Byzantine emperors in Constantinople, from the year 476 up to 800, were the only representatives of imperial power, and in this character they claimed the right of the empire in Italy. Their principal seat of government was at Ravenna, and in that city the Exarchs represented the emperor until they were driven out by the Lombards in 751. The influence of Constantinople did not cease with the extinction of political power; the close connection of Venice with the East was continued for many centuries, and, generally speaking, the authority of the

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higher Byzantine civilisation over the more elementary conditions in Italy was maintained until the thirteenth century.

The art of Constantinople expressed the mystical and philosophical feeling which resulted from the influence of Neo-Platonism on Eastern Christianity. Its aim was to express the passion for union with the Infinite. Giving but slight heed to the world of sense and to human emotions, it became abstract and ascetic. Its neglect of the accidental and transitory led to a rigid and impassive habit; yet so deep was its sense of relationship with the world of the unseen that it seldom failed to be impressive. It touched ordinary human nature most nearly in a passionate love of technique. No skill, no labour was grudged, and never did the imagination clothe itself in more magnificent colour.

The church of Sta. Sophia, rebuilt by Justinian in the sixth century, and the church of S. Vitale, at Ravenna, of the same date, represent the earlier development of Byzantine art.

In the eighth and ninth centuries, subsequent to the Iconoclastic controversy, Byzantine art was neither so imaginative nor so sympathetic; it bears a more distinct mark of non-classical feeling, yet it continued to be the most civilised form of European invention. The *Menologium* of Basil II., for instance, made at the end of the tenth century, is one of the finest books in existence, and the figure of Christ in the apse of the church at Cefalu, in Sicily, dated in the middle of the

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twelfth century, excels any Italian mosaic or painting of the same period.

The actual workmanship of Byzantine artists is comparatively rare in Italy, and it hardly exists in any other part of the West. This work must be carefully distinguished from native Italian work modelled upon it. The mosaics in Roman churches, the sculptures and most of the mosaics at S. Marco in Venice and at Torcello, the frescoes of the Old and New Testament series in the Upper Church at Assisi, the frescoes in SS. Quattro Coronati in Rome, many panel pictures of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in the Uffizi, the Museo Civico at Pisa, and in the Gallery at Siena, together with countless other early works commonly described as Byzantine, were made by native craftsmen who were deeply influenced by the art of Constantinople, but their work has no claim to be called Byzantine in any proper sense of the word. These works by Italian craftsmen vary from the beautiful sculptures at Torcello down to the panels that do not deserve the name of fine art at all. The word "Italo-Byzantine" has been used to characterise the former; the latter can only be described as examples of a rude native manner.

(2) *French Influence*.—The impressive influence of Constantinople began to give place to that of France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as that country became the centre of spiritual and intellectual life in Western Europe.

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The Norman conquest of Naples and of Sicily at the end of the eleventh century, the settlement of Cistercian monks in the middle of the twelfth century, the Angevin conquest of Naples and Sicily in the thirteenth century, and the frequent passage of French knights as a consequence of the Crusades, brought Italy and France into close contact. The new influence is visible in the architecture of the Cistercian churches (Fossanova was consecrated in 1208), and in the castles built in the time of Frederick II. Later it appears in the sculpture of Giovanni Pisano, and finally the "sweet new style" received its specifically Italian form in the painting of Giotto.

(3) *Classical Influence*.—In a certain sense classical tradition lay behind all Italian art, but it did not become predominant until the fifteenth century. In the twelfth century it influenced the Romanesque architecture of Pisa and the sculptures of the Antelami at Parma. In the thirteenth century the sculpture of Niccolo Pisano on the Pisan pulpit is an evident attempt to reproduce the classical Roman style, but the young Italian nation, descended alike from a southern and northern stock, had to go through its time of storm and stress, its *wanderjahr* was spent in company with the brilliant transcendentalism of the North. The study which Donatello and Brunelleschi made of the remains of ancient Rome serves to mark the impulse which Italian painters and sculptors found in the ancient civilisation of their own country. This impulse was twofold: it widened the sympathies of

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men, it cleared many fettering preoccupations from their thoughts, it gave a fresh impulse to learning, it ennobled life with a new sense of power, and in all such ways it reacted on art with immense effect.

On the other hand, where the influence of ancient art was mainly archæological—as in the school of Padua—its effect was no less marked but much less powerful, for classical preconceptions can no more give life to art than the preconceptions of a civilisation Byzantine or mediæval.

§ 2. DESIGN AND COMPOSITION

Grant Allen's thesis was that the individual composition of a picture should be conceived as an organic type evolving along lines of its own. He thought of the art of composition as being in constant process. The plain gestures, the unaffected pose, the simple forms of the fourteenth century become an artificial composition in the sixteenth century, in which gesture expresses complicated feeling, each figure signifies a mood, and the design as a whole is the response to a sensitive and characteristic emotion, the result of large and vital experience.

This ideal of the early part of the sixteenth century was too high for most of the followers of Michael Angelo and Raphael. They were seldom able to make action serve intention, gesture and movement were frequently the instrument of rhetorical sentiment,

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the human form expressed a simulated passion, design became theatrical.

Nevertheless, although the secondary artists of the sixteenth century could not follow in the footsteps of the great masters, the finer characteristics of the time are well marked; and if the visitor to Florence will compare a series of the frescoes in Santa Croce with the designs of Andrea del Sarto in the small cloister of Lo Scalzo, the principles which guided the evolution of composition between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries will become clear.

Leonardo da Vinci touches upon the most important of these when he says, "that figure is most worthy of praise, which by its action best expresses the passion which animates it."

Grant Allen devoted his attention primarily to evolution in composition, but the reader will at once perceive from his analysis that it is impossible to limit the idea to any one point. Other changes incidental to increasing knowledge and varying social conditions were equally marked, and they were subject to the same process as the changes in composition.

§ 3. THE EFFECT OF INCREASING KNOWLEDGE ON PAINTING

In the light of increasing knowledge the methods of painters were in a state of continuous change. The comparatively simple means of the fourteenth century

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grew into the complex practice of the sixteenth century. Men were always trying to express themselves more fully, and as likeness to nature is the most direct means of attaining expression, there was a constant effort in the direction of realism ; not because the painter desired to imitate nature, but because in the fullest realisation he found the most complete means of reaching other minds. Hence every increase in knowledge was seized upon, particularly among the Florentine artists.

The knowledge of linear perspective was only instinctive among the Giotteschi ; in the fifteenth century it became scientific. The effects of light and shade were hardly understood in the fourteenth century ; it was not until the following century that Leonardo and others perceived fully the importance of these phenomena. The true relation of a figure to the atmosphere through which we see it was even more difficult to realise, and it was not until we reach the fully developed art of the closing years of the fifteenth and the early years of the sixteenth centuries that the methods of the artist were perfected.

In addition to the increased knowledge of perspective, and of the phenomena of light and atmosphere, the study of anatomy added greatly to the artist's control over his subject. Leonardo, who was equally great as an artist and as a man of science, carried his studies to the length of becoming a practical anatomist. He warns his fellow-artists that it is necessary to understand the framework of the body in order to

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reach the full power of expression ; he also gives a significant caution against the exaggeration which the gain of such knowledge may lead to.

§ 4. THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS

The student of natural science treats existence as a whole ; he places, therefore, the methods of art along with all other signs of life. They are subject to the same changes and the same general principles as other phenomena. The rise and fall of schools, varieties of method, are no matters of chance nor of individual caprice, they follow the natural order of things.

Grant Allen confined himself to the Italian schools of painting from the time of Duccio at the end of the thirteenth century to the close of the period of the great Venetians at the death of Tintoretto.

The changes affecting social life were pretty clearly marked in each of these three centuries and they produced well-defined characteristics in painting. It has, therefore, become usual to speak of these tendencies in connection with the century to which they principally belong, although they overlap any chronological arrangement.

(a) *The Fourteenth Century.*—The new art which flourished throughout this century began with the painting of Duccio in Siena. It was developed by Giotto, whose most important work is the series of frescoes in the chapel of the Arena in Padua. It

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ended with Spinello Aretino, who painted in the sacristy at S. Miniato in Florence.

From one point of view the revival which led up to the art of this century was influenced by a Roman view of life. Orcagna, for instance, paints his saints in Paradise in serried ranks like the legionaries on Trajan's Column—the atmosphere is one of authority; the hierarchical spirit rules the whole conception.

From another point of view the life of the fourteenth century was ascetic. Theologians regarded the earth as a wilderness through which we advance to a better home, the body was the prison-house of the soul, humility was the basis of character, the contemplative life leading up to ecstasy was the ideal of perfection. The frescoes of the Giotteschi are informed, on the one hand, by a holy calm and a spirit of self-abnegation; on the other hand, by awe of death, of judgment, and of hell.

(b) *The Fifteenth Century.*—The current of life, however, was too strong to allow the ascetic ideal to have permanent control. Already in the middle of the fourteenth century Petrarch and Boccaccio were opening out new ways.

The Renaissance of the fifteenth century was due to the Greek spirit, thus contrasting with the Roman outlook of the previous century. Men felt the charm of the independence of Greek ideals. They saw that life on this earth was a marvellous thing, that the world was no mere vale of tears; they were seized with an unconquerable desire to widen the horizon

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of knowledge; they were filled with a passion for beauty. Plato became to the philosophers of Florence what Aristotle had been to Dante and to St. Thomas Aquinas.

Men valued strength of body, vigour of intellect, greatness of personality; fame became a ruling impulse. The relative estimation of the terrestrial and celestial was almost entirely reversed. Donatello and Ghiberti and Masaccio mark the beginnings of the Greek Renaissance. Raphael's frescoes in the Camera della Segnatura are among the last results of the Hellenic impulse.

(c) *The Sixteenth Century*.—The secular spirit of the fifteenth century, like the ascetic ideal of the fourteenth century, proved inadequate. In Teutonic Europe the original impulse of the Renaissance was developed in the Reformation; in Latin Europe the Catholic reaction against Hellenic and secular feeling took the form of a fresh assertion of papal authority, and the invigoration of the principle of dogmatic teaching.

In architecture St. Peter's is the embodiment of the ideals of the sixteenth century. In painting, Titian and Tintoretto, although far from being moved by the ideals of the Catholic reaction, represent something of the grandiose formality of Spanish manners. In the later days of Italian painting, gesture became stately, emotion was translated into terms of dignified reticence, design was artificial and elaborate, the ideal of beauty changed from the spontaneous freshness and the naïve

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charm of the fifteenth century to the middle-aged magnificence and the composed mien of the sixteenth century.

The genius of Michael Angelo, of Giorgione, of Titian, of Paul Veronese, was unable to conquer the inevitable. When the headship of Spain and the decrees of the Council of Trent became possible, the great period of Italian art was at an end, there was no longer a correspondence between the Italian organism and its environment.

During these three centuries the development of art was closely connected with the life of the people; racial distinctions, tendencies in politics, literature, and religion reacted on the painters. In Siena and Florence the beginnings of the new art coincide with the greatest power and glory of the Republics. In literature likewise the greatest poets were contemporary with the greatest painters. Dante and Giotto are supposed to have been personal friends. Petrarch and Boccaccio lived through the time of the men who covered with frescoes the churches of Florence, the Campo-Santo at Pisa, and the Palazzo Pubblico at Siena. Ariosto was contemporary with Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Titian; the tragedy of Tasso's life ended a year later than the life of Tintoretto, the last of the great painters.

The history of art ran concurrently with that of the Papacy; it sprang into new life at the time of the great Popes who crushed the empire; it flourished exceedingly in the times of the Popes of the Renaissance, men who were in sympathy with humanism, who were

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themselves scholars, founders of museums, and ardent worshippers of classical ideals; it died away in the period when Popes such as Paul IV. and Sixtus V. sat in the chair of St. Peter.

For the important sources of the impulse that produced the art of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, we must consider the slow unwinding of the coil of circumstance in the “dumb centuries,” *i.e.* from the seventh to the eleventh. In the ninth and tenth centuries organised society suffered eclipse during the breaking up of the Frankish empire, and it was only after the reforms of the Emperor Henry III. and the revival under Hildebrand in the middle of the eleventh century that modern life began to emerge. The twelfth century was a time of great activity. The study of Roman law was revived, classical literature once more gave form to human thought, St. Bernard preached afresh the love of God, the way was made straight for the Mendicant revival. Politically Italian nationality was asserting itself in the Lombard League, and by the middle of the thirteenth century the Tuscan Republics had reached to the height of their power.

The astonishing vitality of Italian art was due to the extraordinary power which enabled painters and sculptors to synthesise so completely not only the life of their own time, but the spirit which had moved bygone ages. In classical life they found an ideal of freedom and beauty; from the Byzantine civilisation of Constantinople came the love of symbolism and mysticism; from Rome came regard for law, a passion for

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order, and the tendency to crystallise life into form ; while the conception of love, of which asceticism is the final term, sprang from Christian tradition, and brought into being the emotional life of the Middle Ages.

As the panorama of the three important centuries passes before our eyes, we see that its form is determined by the relative importance of one or other of these forces, never by the entire suppression of any of them.

I

THE MARRIAGE OF THE VIRGIN

I PROPOSE in the following chapters to trace a few successive stages in the evolution of painting in Italy.

The development of the various products of man's collective action closely resembles, in not a few respects, the natural development of plants and animals. Phenomena well known in the organic world have their counterpart and parallel in the super-organic. Everybody is now aware that this is true in the case of languages, which can be traced back, like birds or beasts, to a common origin; but not everybody is aware that it is equally so in the case of arts, of religions, of institutions, of ceremonies. In these papers it is my intention to take certain products of early Italian art, and show how closely their evolution resembles that familiar process of "descent with modification" which Darwin pointed out for us in fish and insect, in fern and flower.

The epoch of Italian painting which began with Duccio and culminated in Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Titian, is in many ways a most favourable one for illustrating this cardinal principle. In the first place, the development of painting during that relatively short

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period was rapid and marvellous; art passed step by step with accelerated haste through many successive stages, so that every half-century of that brilliant time marks a distinct advance upon the half-century that preceded it. But in the second place—what is more important still—the painters of that age exerted their faculty for the most part upon a comparatively limited range of subjects, the elements of which were rigorously prescribed for them by religious convention. At the present day the artist seeks his theme throughout the whole wide world; he paints at will a landscape or a figure-piece, the Death of Cæsar or a Street Scene in Cairo, the Defence of Metz, the Briar Rose cycle, the Christian Martyr, the Matterhorn, the Derby Day. His choice is unlimited. But in the Italy of Giotto and of Filippo Lippi things were ordered quite otherwise. There art was almost entirely religious in character, and the subjects with which it dealt were few and well specified. The artist received a commission from his patrons for such-and-such a definite work—a Madonna and Child, a St. Sebastian, a Transfiguration; and he produced a panel which resembled in all its principal features similar pictures of the same subject by earlier painters. Originality in design was strongly discouraged; indeed, in many cases it was even expressly stated in the bond that the painting agreed upon should closely follow a certain treatment of the theme with which it dealt by some previous hand in such-and-such a church or such-and-such a convent. So many figures were to be introduced for the money. It was also

THE MARRIAGE OF THE VIRGIN

stipulated with legal accuracy that the haloes should be diligently gilded throughout, and that the jewels and ornaments proper to saint or bishop should be carefully designed in the most elaborate and correct fashion.

These brief introductory remarks will serve to show, I hope, the spirit in which I approach my subject. I look at it rather with the eye of an evolutionist than with the eye of an artist or a technical critic. I trust this plea will be held to excuse any shortcomings I may chance to exhibit in knowledge of technique or æsthetic appreciation. I desire to speak rather of the paintings as products than of the painter as producer. I wish to show the stream of development by which, through the hands of various artists and various schools, the dry and lifeless picture in the rude native manner was vivified and spiritualised into the art of Fra Angelico, of Bellini, of Leonardo. For this purpose I will take advantage of the opportunity afforded me by the set subjects of early Italian art, and will trace the evolution in the treatment of each particular theme from the earliest available examples to the full Renaissance, exactly as one might trace the variations in structure and function of an organ or an organism. Other subsidiary principles to which I desire to direct attention must appear one by one in the course of our examination of the various subjects.

I begin my survey with the Sposalizio or Marriage of the Virgin. This sacred theme comes almost earliest in time among the more familiar moments

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in the cycle which deals with the life of Christ and His mother: for though the meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate, the Birth of the Virgin, and her Presentation in the Temple are all anterior to it in historical order, they are less frequent and apparently less rigid in composition than this famous subject, made familiar to us all by Raphael's exquisite and poetical representation in the Brera at Milan. But to judge Raphael's treatment in isolation, without any knowledge of others that preceded it, is almost as futile a proceeding as to judge an Egyptian or Assyrian statue without reference to the mythology and art-products of Egypt and Assyria generally.

When a fourteenth or fifteenth century Italian painter received an order to produce a Sposalizio, what were the elements which his patrons counted upon his introducing into the picture, and without which they would have considered themselves cheated in their bargain? What were the figures and incidents they had learnt from the legends, or had seen before in every Sposalizio with which they were acquainted—the figures and incidents they expected to find in the picture they had commissioned, as necessary parts of a Marriage of the Virgin? To answer this question we must glance for a moment at the legendary story whose details are embodied in every treatment of the subject down to the latest period of sacred art in Italy. For Art in these matters was but the servant of Faith, and reproduced exactly the current spirit of Christian tradition.

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The basis of the tale is found in the two apocryphal gospels of the Protevangelium and the Nativity of Mary. We read there how “the Virgin of the Lord” was brought up, like Samuel, within the precincts of the Temple; and how the High Priest summoned all the widowers of Israel, as suitors for her hand, to a singular ordeal. In order to decide which of them should be betrothed to the chosen maiden, recourse was had to a mode of divination similar to that employed in the case of Aaron in the Book of Numbers. Every man of them was to take a rod according to the house of their fathers; and that man whose rod should miraculously put forth leaves and blossom was thereby shown to be chosen as husband of the Blessed Virgin. When all the rods were laid up in the Temple for the ordeal, behold, the rod of Joseph budded and bloomed blossoms, even as the rod of Aaron yielded almonds in the wilderness. It burgeoned miraculously into pure white lilies. To him, therefore, Mary was solemnly betrothed by the High Priest of Israel; while the disappointed suitors, thus baulked of their will, stood by with their wands in their hands, or broke them in their passion.

Now, representations of the Sposalizio are common in Italian churches or convents, as part of the cycle of the Life of the Virgin, and every one of them contains innumerable references to this central legend. The features all these pictures possess in common may be summed up thus. The action takes place either within or (more often) just outside the Temple. At

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or near the centre of the picture stands the High Priest, usually (and I think always) represented with a long grey beard, a dignified man in his robes of office. He wears on his head in most instances a high-peaked cap, the Italian painters' idea of a Jewish mitre. On one side of him stands Joseph, on the other Mary ; and the High Priest is invariably represented as joining their hands in the sacred grasp of betrothal. Joseph holds in his other hand his budded staff, displaying as a rule both leaves and flowers ; though sometimes this detail is difficult to identify. Not infrequently a dove sits poised upon its summit, representative, I take it, of the choice and indication of the Holy Spirit. This dove, says the story, was miraculously produced by the staff as it budded. Behind Joseph are ranged the other suitors, with their robes in their hands ; and one at least of these, commonly known as the discontented suitor, is engaged in breaking his rod in the extremity of his indignation. Another, the passionate suitor, is in the very act of striking Joseph. The earlier painters often show these faces as distorted with anger. In later times the mien of the suitors is gentler, and their graceful action scarcely more than symbolical. Behind Mary, again, stand the attendant virgins, with whom the figure of St. Anne, the mother of Mary, is usually associated. These are the chief necessary elements of a Sposalizio, and they are probably all that were allowed in the strict Byzantine representation of the subject ; though, as I have never seen a Marriage of the Virgin of the earliest type, I speak on this point

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under correction from those who may happen to have been more fortunate. After Giotto, however, the artists permitted themselves a somewhat wider licence in introducing subsidiary or non-essential figures.

The earliest Sposalizio to which I will call attention here is the fresco by Giotto in the Madonna dell' Arena at Padua. It forms one of the great series representing the life of Christ and the legend of His mother which cover the entire walls of that most perfect monument of early fourteenth-century painting. The chapel itself is externally a plain and almost squalid little building, not quite adequately lighted by its narrow windows; but within it is ablaze throughout with pure and brilliant colour. Four of the pictures (as is usual in this cycle) refer to the story of the Espousal of the Virgin. In one, the rods are brought to the High Priest; in the next, they are carefully watched at the altar; in a third is represented the wedding procession of the Virgin, and in a fourth her betrothal. The one with which we are here especially concerned may be ranked among the most charming pictures of the entire series. It has not, it is true, the touching grace and pathos of the world-renowned Pietà, which forms, to my mind, the absolute high-water mark of Giotto's pictorial achievement; but it is spirited in its grouping, beautiful in its colour, and free on the whole from stiffness or conventionality. Indeed, I may remark here of all these Paduan frescoes, that so far as freedom in drawing the figure is concerned, they are vastly superior to the ordinary easel-pictures by Giotto or his

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followers, through which alone most northern people must necessarily judge him. In his Madonnas especially, and in the saints of altar-pieces, Giotto still retains much of the conventional stiffness of Duccio and his predecessors; but when he gets away from massive haloes and stucco backgrounds to such scenes as these, he lets his hand have free play, and grows at once comparatively naturalistic. Even so in our own time painters scarcely dare to vary a detail in the representation of the Crucifixion, while they give their fancy untrammelled flight in less severely conventionalised subjects. One may even say in brief of the Florentine artists of the fourteenth century, that they were essentially a school of fresco painters, who cannot be fairly or adequately judged, save in their own chosen medium in the churches of Italy.

In Giotto's treatment of the Sposalizio, the Temple is represented by a sort of open tabernacle, with a vaulted and richly decorated apse in the background. Near the centre of the picture is the High Priest, here represented without his mitre. On his right hand stands Joseph with the budding staff and dove; on his left Mary, in the conventional flowing robe of her Madonnahood. Down to Raphael's time, these positions are uniform. A little behind the Blessed Virgin, her father, St. Joachim, looks on at the ceremony. Close by are grouped the attendant women, with the aged St. Anne, and possibly St. Elisabeth, though of this I am doubtful. Behind St. Joseph stand the rejected suitors, with their wands in their hands.



MARRIAGE OF THE VIRGIN : *Madonna dell' Arena, Padua.*

GIOTTO

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Notice especially the attitude of one of them, breaking his staff on his knee—an attitude both natural and graceful, which recurs again and again in the treatment of the subject down to the days of Raphael. The suitor who advances nearest to St. Joseph has his hand raised in air as if to strike him.

Judged by the standard of any previous painting, such as the stiff and wooden saints in the rude native manner, or even the quaint Old Testament scenes on the walls of the upper church at Assisi, the grace and vigour of this naïve composition are truly remarkable. Yet one may observe that the attitudes are still for the most part monotonously upright and somewhat constrained. The limbs are chiefly concealed by masses of straight perpendicular drapery, and little emotion is displayed in the faces. The discontented suitor, for example, looks calmly resigned; and the passionate youth, who raises his hand to strike St. Joseph, has so little of anger in face or mien that he might almost be mistaken for a priest in benediction. Giotto has here reached the stage of original grouping and fairly animated action, but has not yet attained to the higher power of dramatic and emotional expression which he compasses in the latest frescoes of the series.

My next example is taken from a fresco usually attributed to Taddeo Gaddi in a chapel of the church of Santa Croce in Florence. And I may here remark, in passing, that I do not propose to enter in this series into any questions of attribution, because I am only concerned with subject and time from the point of

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view of evolution. It is the period, not the painter, that matters for our purpose. In this animated example some attempt has been made to give Oriental tone to the background by the introduction of palms and other Eastern vegetation. The wall at the back is a feature which recurs in subsequent pictures. The Temple is represented by a small square building, with a loggia. All these points seem like innovations of Gaddi's. Near the centre, as usual, stands the High Priest in his mitre, joining the hands of the Virgin and her betrothed. Joseph's rod with the dove is again conspicuous. Behind the bridegroom, the angry suitor, with upraised hand, is just in the act of striking Joseph. The character of the rod-breaker, on the other hand, is here duplicated. One suitor in the foreground breaks his rod under his foot in a constrained and rather ill-drawn attitude, where the artist has not quite successfully aimed at foreshortening. Another, a little behind him, breaks the rod with his hands, without the aid of a fulcrum. These points again recur in later pictures. In the rear are musicians with bagpipes and with long trumpets, which last frequently crop up again in representations of the Sposalizio throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They are additions to the simple Giottesque model, though found in his previous fresco of the bridal procession. To the right, besides St. Anne and the attendant women, who are there as of necessity, several children are introduced in the foreground as picturesque accessories. Taddeo, however, has been very unsuccessful in giving them childish



MARRIAGE OF THE VIRGIN : *Santa Croce, Florence.*

TADDEO GADDI

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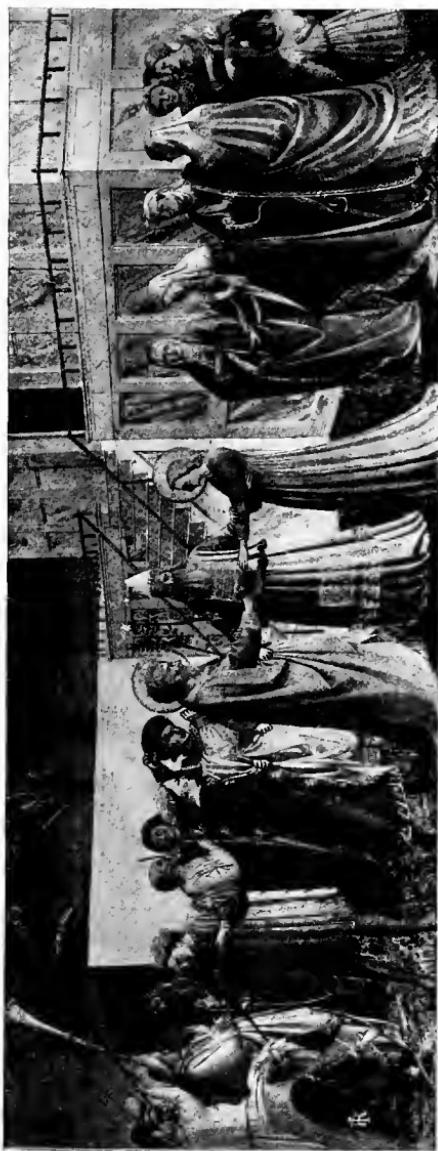
features or figures. They are simply dwarfish men and women, on a smaller scale than the other personages of the picture.

As a work of art, this fresco is far less interesting than Giotto's at Padua. It has little beauty. Nevertheless, we may trace in it many distinct marks of upward evolution. Besides the purely formal one of the accessory figures, there is a note of advance in the greater variety and plasticity of the attitudes and in the expression of the features. The suitor with up-raised hand is more obviously engaged in the act of striking; the personage with demonstrative hand to the left is evidently remonstrating with his tall neighbour; the faces in many instances are clearly portraits. There is spirit in the puffed cheeks and bent neck of the bagpipe-blower; while the attitude of the Virgin implies some consciousness of the gravity and spiritual importance of the ceremony in which she forms the principal figure. As a whole, the composition is distinctly alive, and may be accepted as a typical specimen of the followers of Giotto.

Fra Angelico's exquisite Sposalizio in the Uffizi at Florence marks an immense advance in grouping and in treatment. (Of course the reader must understand that I select a few salient examples alone, omitting many intermediate stages.) The elements of the picture remain the same as ever; but the life and movement are totally different. The confused crowd which fills Taddeo Gaddi's foreground gives place in the measured work of the monk of Fiesole to an orderly

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and simple arrangement of distinct figures. The action here has its scene outside the Temple ; the steps of the building form a foretaste of the later conceptions by Perugino and Raphael. There is still the garden-wall of Taddeo's treatment, overtopped by quaint palms of the painter's imagination. Landscape as yet is not studied from nature. But the High Priest's robes have become more costly. Fra Angelico's innate love of decorative detail is shown in the borders of St. Joseph's garment, as in those of St. Anne and the attendant maidens. Yet the saintliness of Joseph's face and the pure innocence of the Virgin belong essentially to the Frate's own delicate and exquisite character. The figures and expressions of the women who surround St. Anne are sweet and touching ; the attitude of the children to the extreme right of the picture breathes Angelico's tender and trustful nature. Observe, too, the clenched fists and vigorous pose of the assaulting suitors, rarely full of action for this holiest of painters. As in Taddeo's case, the suitor who breaks his rod is duplicated ; one, as before, snaps it under his feet, while the other does it with his hands unimpeded. But what could be more charming than the figure of this last, in his Florentine hose and his daintily painted coat, like a herald's tabard ? All the formal factors of the scene are still retained : the budding rod and dove, the wall, the children, the long trumpets to the extreme left ; everything is there as in Taddeo's picture, and in the selfsame order. But the soul is Angelico's. The longer we look at it, the more we love it.



MARRIAGE OF THE VIRGIN : *Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

FRA ANGELICO

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Passing over a great gap the two next instances to which I would direct the reader's notice are the famous Sposalizio by Raphael in the Brera at Milan, and the Sposalizio now attributed to Lo Spagna in the museum at Caen in Normandy. The latter picture has been traditionally ascribed to Perugino, and we owe the correction to the keen critical insight of Mr. Berenson.

The Caen Sposalizio was preserved in the Duomo at Perugia until 1797, when the French removed it. Raphael's Sposalizio, painted in 1504, is now in the gallery of the Brera at Milan. In both works the main outline of the arrangement is the same; in both the background is occupied by a small polygonal temple, "a charming forecast," says Springer, "of Bramante's buildings." The central group in each includes the long-bearded High Priest, who joins the hands of the bridal pair. In each, Mary is attended by St. Anne and the bevy of women; Joseph by the suitors in jacket and hose, well displaying the figure of the discontented lover, who breaks his wand across his knee after the Giottesque prototype; in each there is a suggestion of a wide hilly landscape, such as was natural to those who looked down on the spreading valley of the Tiber from the walled height of Perugia. This largeness of open-air view with citied hill-tops is extremely characteristic of Umbrian painting.

The probability is that Lo Spagna had the picture of Raphael in his mind, and yet it is noteworthy how the grace and beauty of the one becomes in the other commonplace and fantastic detail. Another point of

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interest is that Raphael, contrary to the tradition of Giotto and also of the Umbrian school, has placed the Virgin to the spectator's left of the High Priest. It has been suggested that this change may have been due to the influence of Raphael's first master, Timoteo Viti, who had worked under the painters of Ferrara and Bologna.

In other particulars the difference is also marked. Lo Spagna's figures almost always stand, as if in reverie, very distinct from one another; even their draperies impinge as little as possible upon the draperies of their neighbours. They can contemplate and reflect; they do not act. They seem, so to speak, mere saints in the abstract. There is no attempt to throw them into any real dramatic relation to one another. The grouping is purely symmetrical and formal. It is quite otherwise with Raphael even in this early picture painted while he was under the influence of Perugino. His figures are grouped with exquisite grace and skill into consistent and picturesque dramatic concert; and they exhibit a tenderness, a poetical delicacy, far above Lo Spagna's affected prettinesses. True, the work is still essentially Umbrian in type; it was painted in the very year when Raphael was to go to Florence and acquire the third of his four manners. The Virgin is but poeticised Perugino in style, so is the dainty hooded lady just beside her; so is the young man (said to be Raphael himself) close behind St. Joseph. But the ease and naturalness of the whole is utterly beyond Perugino's reach; nothing the placid Umbrian master



MARRIAGE OF THE VIRGIN : *Brera Gallery*, Milan.

RAPHAEL

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ever painted was half so alive as the principal characters in this dainty little drama. It holds us spellbound. We are still far from the astonishing vigour of action of Raphael's Roman manner; but we are almost equally far in the opposite direction from the comparatively static and dreamy personages whom Perugino painted, doing nothing in particular save existing beautifully in rapt contemplation on the walls of the bright little Cambio at Perugia. Much as Raphael was to learn at Florence and Rome, he was Raphael in germ before ever he set foot beyond his native Umbria. At least so it seems to the evolutionist, in whose eyes potentiality is already half performance.

The National Gallery in London possesses two specimens of Sposalizio paintings, which I have not reproduced here, because it is comparatively easy for any English reader whom I may have succeeded in interesting in this subject to drop in at Trafalgar Square any afternoon and look at them. Both of them hang on the entrance wall of the Sienese room, and both are interesting from the point of view of our present inquiry. The first is attributed to Niccolo Buonacorso, a painter of Siena in the fourteenth century. It is earlier in type than the earliest of those I have here described, and is extremely rude in execution. Yet, as often happens in the school of Duccio, there is a certain attempt at naturalistic drawing and at Oriental scenery. Notice, for example, the palm trees, as in Taddeo Gaddi and Fra Angelico; also the dusky-faced player on the kettledrum, who is rather Indian than Syrian in char-

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acter. Comparison of the Temple and other adjuncts with the illustrations here given will be interesting and instructive. The second is by a somewhat later but nameless Sienese, and is chiefly interesting for the frank anachronism of its Gothic architecture. A careless observer might fail to notice the figure of the suitor who breaks his wand; but if you look close to the frame on the left-hand side, you will find he is there, though little conspicuous.

In organic evolution one can best understand the close inter-relations of genera and species when one examines a large number of allied forms in a single museum. It is the same with pictures. One can only grasp the close affiliation of one form on another when one takes a number of contemporary or closely successive specimens. For the purposes of this chapter I have been obliged to confine myself to a very few selected cases: if I had allowed myself twenty or thirty illustrations instead of five or six, the gradual nature of the evolutionary process would have been far more conspicuous. As it is, I have been compelled to suppress many interesting intermediate stages. These the reader must take upon trust, or supply for himself from his own observation. The relation of the Raphael to the Spagna is the normal relation of each chief work to its immediate predecessor. Modification is only in detail. Even in the earlier instances, if you compare the groups in the Fra Angelico with the groups in the Taddeo Gaddi, from the children on the far right to the musicians on the far left, you will find they follow without a single



MARRIAGE OF THE VIRGIN : *Musée de Caen*

LO SPAGNA

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exception precisely the same conventional order. The best way for those who may interest themselves in this aspect of art is to take up one or two separate subjects during an Italian tour, and make as wide a collection as possible of illustrative photographs.

And now a few words as to the general method. There are two fundamentally different ways of regarding nature and the works of man. They are usually found in different persons. Some men have the eye for likeness ; some men the eye for difference. Of course, in the strictest sense, both are always, to some extent, combined in every personality ; for there can be no cognition of any object without a simultaneous perception of its resemblance to some things and its difference from others. Every mental act requires a consciousness of likeness to be combined with a consciousness of diversity. But in some men the one faculty immensely preponderates, and in some men the other. I think it is usual for the artist and the art-critic to be most deeply impressed with the differences of things ; while the man of science is more deeply impressed by their likenesses.

The perception of likeness in the midst of diversity is fundamental, indeed, in the scientific intellect ; it forms the very basis of the evolutionary spirit. Classification depends upon it ; so does the idea of descent with modification. The biologist looks, for example, at a whale, and sees at once that, in spite of apparent differences, it is really allied to the horse and the cow rather than to the shark and the salmon. Deep-seated

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resemblances strike him more than superficial diversities. All his schemes of nature are built up out of such rapid recognitions of similarity. Homologous organs appear to him related under the densest disguises. He overlooks the outer mask, and sees beneath it to the structural identity. The artist, on the other hand, must catch at the surface diversities of things; the touch is all in all to him: his education is almost entirely an education in perceiving and registering the minutest shades and tones of difference. "Effects" are his stock in trade. He is great on light and shade, on texture, on surface. From this fundamental distinction of aim distinctions of judgment must invariably arise; and the man of science must be from certain points of view almost inevitably a bad critic of artistic performance.

Yet there is a sphere, it seems to me, where this peculiar habit of the evolutionary mind may cast a certain amount of light upon the products, if not on the processes, of artistic genius. For the artist and the art-critic, carefully trained to discriminate schools and masters, to look for the special signs which mark the work of this or that painter, to note in detail the minutest differences, may sometimes be less impressed by the underlying identity of structure and composition in a whole series of works from the most unlike hands than by their differences of treatment. The evolutionist, on the other hand, coming to art with the preconceptions formed in very dissimilar fields of study, may sometimes see certain unessential yet interesting aspects

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of art more vividly than they are seen by the artist or the art-critic. It is this perception of likeness in difference which I venture to plead as my excuse. I am concerned not so much with treatment as with subject. From the first day when I began to look with interest at Italian art, the singular similarity between the course of its evolution and the course of evolution in animal and vegetable life struck me most forcibly. During many successive Italian tours, many visits to Paris, Munich, Florence, Venice, I have collected facts and examples in the same direction; and I am emboldened now to lay my results before the world, because I believe I have certain neglected aspects of the case to present which are relatively new, and which may prove interesting even to connoisseurs by virtue of being taken from a fresh point of view of the subject at issue. I do not mean, of course, to assert that the idea of evolution or of comparative study in art is new; but I do believe that the conception of the individual composition as an organic type, evolving along lines of its own, *is* a new and fruitful one, and on that conception I base the claim to an impartial hearing.

Put briefly, I would say, every subject or theme in Italian art starts, like an organic type, from a special central form, Byzantine or Giottesque, as the case may be; and varies therefrom by descent with modification. And the resulting varieties are produced by diversities of type in the environment. The Umbrian and Sienese forms, influenced by the pietism of St. Francis of Assisi

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and St. Catherine of Siena, vary in the direction of spirituality, fervour, a purely religious aim, a certain almost affected daintiness of composition. The Florentine, more cultivated, and tinged from the first with humanism, vary in the direction of grace, a sense of beauty, poetry, the ideal. The Venetian, as one might expect from a great commercial community, work out their own worldlier evolution in the direction of richness, luxuriance, an opulence of colour, a voluptuous wealth of female loveliness. The Lombard type is gracious; the Paduan, scholastic, as befits the denizen of a university city. But still, as in organic forms derived from a common origin, we can affiliate all on a single ancestor. We find in every school the elements of the structure in each subject remain ever the same, while all the parts can be directly traced back as individual variations upon the corresponding parts of the primitive type to which they owe their origin. In the present case I have striven only to show persistence of type; in subsequent instances I shall strive to point out differentiation of varieties.

Mr. Herbert Spencer's formula is justified even here: each step in the evolution shows greater heterogeneity, greater coherence, and greater definiteness than the stage that preceded it. Indeed, the closer one looks into the character of this correspondence, the clearer does it become that the prime form essentially resembles an organic ancestor, and that the variants follow the selfsame laws as evolving animals. The picture may be regarded as a parent

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type, giving rise to a family of differentiated descendants.

To enforce these ideas, I have thought it best to begin with a comparatively unfamiliar subject, like the Sposalizio, instead of beginning with a familiar one, like the Annunciation or the Madonna and Child. In the latter cases, it is true, the unity of type is throughout much greater, and the course of evolution more absolutely unbroken. But the subject is there beset with preconceptions. Now, I desire rather to unfold my principles by gradual stages; and for this purpose it is best to begin with a simple and relatively unknown scene, and to lead up by slow degrees to more strictly conventionalised yet more complex problems.

II

THE VISITATION

THE group of related pictures with which we dealt in the first chapter of this series, representing the Sposalizio, or Marriage of the Virgin, belongs to the legendary cycle of the Life of Mary, and of her devout parents, St. Joachim and St. Anna. It is but one out of a numerous family, based on the uncanonical Protevangelion and the apocryphal gospel of the Birth of Mary. The whole of this cycle has suggested subjects for representation in art, almost as fixed and constant in their elements as the one which I have already selected for illustration. The chief moments in the series thus characterised are these: Joachim's offering rejected by the High Priest; Joachim retires to the sheepfold; Joachim's sacrifice; the meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate (a particularly well-known specimen of which may be seen in the little fresco attributed by Ruskin to Giotto, but more probably by a follower of his school, in a lunette of the cloisters of the Spanish chapel at Florence); the Birth of the Virgin (a very frequent theme, one of the most familiar examples of which is Ghirlandajo's masterpiece in Santa Maria Novella); the Presentation

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of the Virgin in the Temple; the four stages in the episode of the miracle of the rods; and the Marriage of the Virgin. All these incidents are represented by Giotto on the walls of the Madonna dell' Arena at Padua—a little church which forms a perfect museum of Giottesque art, absolutely indispensable to the student of evolution in Italian painting. I would say to those who visit Italy for the sake of serious study of her art in its developmental aspect, "Whatever else you see or omit, do not fail to see the Giottos at Padua."

The subject which we have here to deal with, on the other hand, is taken direct from the actual gospel narrative. The details are suggested by the very words of Scripture. It is Luke, the historian of the infancy, who tells us the graphic episode of the Visitation or Salutation of Elisabeth. "And Mary arose in those days," says the painter Evangelist, "and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth." And thereupon Elisabeth answered with the words already spoken by the Angel of the Annunciation, "Blessed art thou among women." And Mary broke forth into the well-known hymn of the Magnificat, which has been sung ever since by generation after generation in all the Churches of Christendom. The moment chosen by the Italian painters for the representation of this impressive scene is always the one where Elisabeth steps forward to greet the Blessed Virgin with the familiar words,

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“ Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me ? ” That sentence strikes the keynote of the composition.

From the nature of the situation, the “ Visitation ” occurs more often as one of a connected series of frescoes than as an easel picture, a panel, or an altarpiece. For the latter purposes donors usually preferred a Madonna and Child, a Santissima Trinità, or a figure of their own patron saint, in martyrdom or otherwise—a St. Sebastian, a St. Dominic, a Santa Lucia, a St. Catherine. And it must always be borne in mind that almost all early Italian pictures were so commissioned by a particular donor for a particular shrine or altar or chapel. The painter could not freely choose his own subjects and incidents ; he was strictly conditioned by the necessities of space and by the name-saint or selected episode of his special patron ; the terms of his contract bound and cramped him. In the case of frescoes, however, which were often employed to decorate the walls of a loggia or a cloister, and to cover entire spaces in church or chapel, the choice of subject was often wider. Such works were frequently commissioned by the monastery, the church, or the civic authorities ; and they generally bore the character of a consecutive narrative, like Benozzo Gozzoli’s charming suite of Old Testament episodes in the Campo Santo at Pisa. Thus a whole series of stories representing the life of a saint is often painted on a single wall, as in the case of Andrea Mantegna’s cycle of the history of St. James in the

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Eremitani at Padua, or Spinello Aretino's of the history of St. Benedict at San Miniato al Monte. Florence is full of such pictured bibles and saintly histories. From a very early date, frescoes of this type often possess far greater freedom, individuality, and vigour than the conventionalised Madonnas and Saints, with their richly gilt haloes, represented by the selfsame painters on wood or canvas.

In the ordinary treatment of the Visitation, the constant elements are only three. In the first place, the background is formed by a loggia or arcade, which is often square in the earlier pictures, but consists almost invariably of a round Roman or Renaissance arch in the later ones. In the second place, we have the necessary figures of the Virgin and St. Elisabeth, in the act of embracing or saluting one another. Most often, St. Elisabeth, a grave and dignified personage, bends forward in an attitude of studied humility; the Blessed Virgin, though meek as always, stands slightly more erect, as if conscious of the natural superiority of her position. Of course Elisabeth is represented as a woman a generation older than Mary. In most instances the arch is seen just behind the heads of these two principal characters; its summit forms, as it were, a round-topped frame for their figures, the upper part of which is beautifully silhouetted against the sky in the background. Additional figures of attendants or spectators may be added or not, according to the taste and fancy, not of the painter, but of the person to whose order he produced his picture.

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Giotto's "Visitation" in the Madonna dell' Arena at Padua is one of the smallest of the beautiful series with which the great founder of Florentine art adorned the little church in the deserted amphitheatre. It occupies a narrow space on the wall of the choir arch, just beneath the figure of the Virgin in the "Annunciation," of which a reproduction will be given here when we come to reach that more difficult subject. As a work of art, this fresco possesses peculiar evolutionary interest. Giotto began his series with the legendary history of the Madonna's birth and childhood; and he had therefore painted fifteen out of the forty frescoes which composed the cycle before he reached this episode of the Visitation. But he was learning as he went—teaching himself by practice. He gained every day in knowledge of action. The earlier frescoes, which constitute the upper row, have still much of the stiffness and quaintness of early tradition. This "Salutation," the first of the lower set, presents a distinct advance in drawing and in spirit on the previous works of the cycle. Compare the ease and naturalness of St. Elisabeth's attitude in this beautiful scene with the lifeless uplifted hand of the angry suitor in the "Sposalizio," reproduced from this church in the first chapter. Or again, contrast the delicate expression of hope and trust on the elder woman's face, with the abstract unconcern of the principal actors in the "Marriage of the Virgin." You can see at a glance from these two specimens what it was that made Giotto into the father and



THE VISITATION: *Madonna dell'Arena, Padua.*

GIOTTO

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prophet of the art of the Renaissance. Mr. Quilter says well of this particular picture: "It is almost the first fresco where Giotto's full powers are seen. I know no two figures finer in their way than those of the Virgin and Elisabeth. Here the plainness of Mary's face seems quite obscured by the beauty of its expression. And every line of the two figures helps to tell the story." The scene is real; the actors in it are living characters.

Of the formal elements in this picture, I will only call attention to the delicate arabesque work on the temple in the background, and to the round arch in the wall behind, which, though so little conspicuous here, becomes a main feature in such later work as Pacchiarotto's and Albertinelli's. It is an "anticipatory rudiment." Such first appearances of a detail afterwards highly elaborated are always interesting from the evolutionary standpoint. Notice also the solid Giottesque haloes round the heads of the two saints; the dainty embroidery on the Virgin's robe, which foreshadows Fra Angelico; the very characteristic faces of the attendants behind the Madonna, with a roundness of outline most typical of their painter; and last of all, the manner in which the figures are still to a great extent enveloped and concealed in perfect sheets of drapery. This is particularly conspicuous in the turbaned attendant behind St. Elisabeth. Indeed, while the two principal personages display a vigour of action hitherto unknown in Italian art, the arms and hands of the turbaned

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attendant are almost as lifeless as a Roman mosaic. Giotto took great pains with his Virgin and his St. Elisabeth, but appears to have made no special effort to give life and reality to these accessory personages. They were mere make-weights.

The next example of the "Visitation" to which I shall call attention here is a curious little fresco by Taddeo Gaddi in the Baroncelli chapel at Santa Croce in Florence. It occupies a quaint and irregular corner on one side of a pointed window, the opposite side being taken up by the sister subject of the Annunciation; and its peculiar shape is therefore necessarily dependent upon the form of the space between the outer arch and the actual glass-work. But its composition in other respects shows us how closely Taddeo followed in his master's footsteps. Observe in particular the attitudes of Mary and Elisabeth: the Virgin to the left, as before and always; the elder saint to the right, in much the same position, save only that here she kneels instead of merely bowing. Observe also the position of the hands and arms, and the grouping of the attendants. But, above all things, notice the building in the background, now becoming more conspicuous, and with its round arch slowly leading up to the later and far more elegant arrangement in Pacchiarotto and Mariotto Albertinelli. The development of this round arch is to my mind one of the most instructive points in the evolutionary history of early Italian art, and I hope my readers will pay proper attention to it.



THE VISITATION: *Santa Croce, Florence.*

LADDEO GADDI

THE VISITATION

There is a "Visitation" by Ghirlandajo in Santa Maria Novella at Florence which illustrates certain tendencies of later or intermediate Florentine art, but which comes less well into the main line of our present series. I introduce it merely as showing the amount of variation that the Middle Renaissance painters permitted themselves in dealing with such conventionalised subjects. Here the central group consists of a Madonna and Saint Elisabeth, whose features and figures may be instructively compared with Giotto's on the one hand and Pacchiarotto's on the other. There are also two attendants, as in the Giottesque model; but their position has been transposed, and their drawing is of course of Ghirlandajo's period. Yet it is interesting to note, even so, in the roundness of their faces a distinct reminiscence of the Giottesque model. The rest of the fresco, which is large and filled with figures, consists of contemporary spectators, regarded as bystanders, and introduced, after Ghirlandajo's fashion, out of compliment to his employers. Conspicuous among them (and shown on the right in the portion of the picture I have selected for reproduction here) is the portrait of the stately Giovanna degli Albizi, so familiar to most of us from the portrait by Ghirlandajo, executed no doubt as a study for these very frescoes, and lately lent by Mr. Willett to our National Gallery in London. These frescoes of Ghirlandajo's at Santa Maria Novella form a double series of the Life of the Virgin and of St. John the Baptist: they were

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executed by order of Giovanna's father-in-law, Giovanni Tornabuoni. Her portrait occurs in no less than three of them, always as a mere onlooker at the central action. As for the round arch, it occurs even here; but Ghirlandajo has thrown it into the background of the work, and has made no use of it as a frame or setting for the two principal figures.

Before passing on to the next "Salutation" of our series, I shall dart back at a tangent, as it may seem at first, to a totally different subject, which nevertheless will be seen in the end, I trust, to cast no little light both on Pacchiarotto's "Visitation," with which we must presently deal, and on other subsequent groups of pictures. Everybody has heard that with Giotto begins the great upward development in Florentine painting. Those Northern people who only know the father of Tuscan art from the stiff and heavily-gilt Madonnas and Saints in English or French galleries can hardly understand the enthusiasm which he kindles in the minds of those who have learnt his handicraft at Padua and Assisi, Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella. But the true explanation is twofold. In the first place Giotto's frescoes, for the most part representing scenes and actions, are immensely superior in drawing and in dramatic force to his isolated saints, which for the most part represent mere abstract figures, still largely influenced by Byzantine conventions. In his gilt Madonnas Giotto went as far as he dared, no doubt, in the direction of naturalness: a Florentine or Paduan congregation

THE VISITATION: Santa Maria Novella, Florence.



THE VISITATION

of the early fourteenth century would have been shocked at too grave a departure from the wooden Virgins with which their childhood had been so long familiar. It was only when he got away from altarpieces, and painted in fresco living scenes from the Gospels or the legends of the saints, that he could give free flight to his growing power of dramatic representation. A supreme example of this power, in the zenith of its development, I shall reproduce later on when we come to deal with the treatment of the Pietà. In the second place—and this is the point to which I desire to direct special attention—we can only gauge Giotto aright by comparing him with those who went before him, not with those who came after him. We must never forget that spectators of the fourteenth century, who gazed at the frescoes in the Madonna dell' Arena at Padua or in the Lower Church at Assisi, had never before seen anything like so truthful, so living, and so moving a representation of human activities. The quaintness and occasional stiffness which we now perceive in Giotto's work were not there at all to critics of that period. Where we say, "How odd!" they said, "How lifelike!" Where we say, "How constrained!" they said, "How natural!" We must bear in mind Mrs. Browning's warning against those who should—

"Because of some stiff draperies and loose joints,
Gaze scorn down from the heights of Raphaelhood
On Cimabue's picture."

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The fact is, before the early Sienese and Florentine schools, nobody had ever attempted to make a saint look really human at all ; till Giotto came, nobody had ever succeeded in making an attitude really express the action it was intended to indicate. A certain homeliness in Giotto's episodes made them real to his contemporaries. Whoever wishes to understand this may examine the pictures by Duccio of Siena in the National Gallery ; for Duccio performed for Sienese art much the same revolution as Giotto inaugurated for the art of Florence.

In order to mark the greatness of this advance, and also to illustrate another principle necessary for the full comprehension of Pacchiarotto's "Visitation," I shall step aside, as I said before, for a moment from my main subject, to give an illustration of a saintly figure of the rude native manner in all its unmixed stiffness and woodenness. There is a "Mary Magdalen" at the Belle Arti in Florence which admirably exemplifies this earliest stage in the evolution of Italian painting. It is a rude figure of the penitent saint, upright and ungainly, clad from head to foot in nothing save the waving masses of her own impossible and wildly luxuriant hair. The primitive artist who drew it had to represent the Magdalen as nude—a penitent in the wilderness after her legendary flight to Provence ; but his sense of her saintliness would not allow him to do more than suggest the inevitable fact of her nudity. Therefore he draped her in her own falling tresses as in a cloak or mantle ; and the figure



THE MAGDALEN : *The Academy, Florence.* 13TH CENTURY

THE VISITATION

which he produced, itself copied from some earlier painting, was copied in turn by dozens of unknown craftsmen after him. Can we wonder that a public brought up upon such uncouth and lifeless images as this should have gazed with delight, admiration, and astonishment at the easy movements and natural attitude of Giotto's "Visitation"? Centuries seem to separate these almost contemporary pictures.¹

But that is not all. The long mantle of hair became the symbol and, if I may be allowed so irreverent an expression, the trade-mark of the Magdalen. Whenever we see a female saint more or less lightly clad, or absolutely nude, enveloped in masses of luxuriant hair, we know it is the figure of the penitent sinner. Often enough she holds in her hands the alabaster box of ointment, very precious, which she broke in the house of Simon the Pharisee; but often, too, she is represented without it. As an example at

¹ At the risk of digression, I will venture to add a short identification of the side-episodes in this picture, beginning from the top and passing from left to right alternately. (1) The Magdalen anoints the feet of Christ: the canopy marks that the action takes place in a house; the tower, that its scene is a city. The other figures are St. Peter, St. John, and the Pharisee. (2) The Raising of Lazarus. An attendant is naïvely represented as holding his nose. (3) "*Noli me tangere*": Christ and the Magdalen, in the garden, after the resurrection. (4) The Magdalen preaches the Gospel at Marseilles: the tower again indicates a city. (5) The Magdalen, retiring to a cave in the wilderness (the Sainte Baume in Provence), is lifted daily by four angels, and beholds the beatific vision. She is now, as penitent, clad in her own hair only. (6) An angel brings her the holy wafer to the Sainte Baume. (7) The Last Communion of the Magdalen. St. Maximin brings her the viaticum. (8) The Burial of the Magdalen: canopy and tower indicate the interior of a church in a city. For the legend see "Lives of the Saints," or Mrs. Jameson's "Sacred and Legendary Art."

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the opposite end of the scale, I give here a reproduction of Titian's "Magdalen." In this picture you will see at once that the central idea remains unchanged—a woman sheltering her modesty under the copious masses of her own rich hair. But while the early artist is engaged in producing the image of a saint, Titian, after the fashion of the later Venetian painters, is anxious only to display his art by producing a beautiful picture of a beautiful woman. He conceals just so much of the figure as his reticence demands, and displays just so much as a delicate sense of the becoming permits him. You might trace the evolution of the "Magdalen" through a hundred stages, from my nameless picture in the *Belle Arti* to the (doubtfully authentic) Correggio at Dresden, and yet find in all that these essential features by which we recognise the type were faithfully adhered to.

Every saint had thus his or her distinguishing symbol, by which each was instantly recognisable, during the ages of faith, to every beholder.

And now, having settled this initial point, we may go on to the consideration of our Pacchiarotto. Observe, in the first place, that here, as before, Mary occupies the left side of the picture, while the right invariably belongs to Elisabeth. This arrangement of the figures is, I think, universal. Notice, too, that the attitude largely recalls Giotto's; and compare it with the other attitude in the Albertinelli which we will shortly examine. But observe again how the archway, of which we had in Giotto a mere anticipatory rudi-



THE MAGDALEN : *Pitti Gallery, Florence.*

TITIAN

THE VISITATION

ment, as a biologist would say, and in Taddeo Gaddi a more advanced form, has now become a prime element in the composition. The triumphal arch, of which it forms a portion, marks Pacchiarotto's position in the history of the Renaissance. I need hardly say that many intermediate stages, unrepresented here, had intervened between Giotto or Taddeo and the Sienese painter. This triumphal arch is partly Roman, partly Renaissance, in character; like the similar arch in Ghirlandajo's "Adoration of the Shepherds," in the same gallery, it testifies to the growth of the antiquarian spirit among Italian painters. The horses on its summit have been suggested by, though not actually copied from, the bronze horses on the portico of St. Mark's at Venice, which are believed to have originally adorned the triumphal arch of Nero at Rome, and which were afterwards transported to decorate that of Constantine at Constantinople. Their introduction gives a note of antiquity to the picture. Giotto and the Giottesques frankly represented biblical scenes in fourteenth-century surroundings; the early Renaissance strove to give some semblance of Greco-Roman rather than Oriental culture. It is worth while to notice the skill with which Pacchiarotto builds up his composition from the figures and heads of the two chief characters, through the mass of the arch, to the Holy Spirit brooding above over the entire picture.

But what are these attendant personages on either side? Why, in place of the female retainers in Giotto's work, have we this incongruous collection of Christian

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monks and martyrs and bishops? Clearly Pacchiarotto could not have conceived them as being actually present at the moment of the Visitation. If you want clear proof of this, observe that the figure in the foreground on the left is St. John the Baptist himself: he holds the reed cross and bears the scroll with *Ecce Agnus Dei*, which are the recognised symbols of the last of the prophets, who exclaimed "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." But St. John could not have been present as a spectator at this scene, which preceded his birth; for we all know that "when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost," which we see in this picture in the form of a dove descending upon her from the heavens in the distance. The fact is, in such a composition as this, the later saints are regarded as looking on at the action represented much as you or I might do. They stand outside the central theme of the artist. Giotto's commission was for a "Visitation" only; Pacchiarotto's was for a "Visitation" with certain saints looking on, to be painted for the church of S. Spirito in Siena. Probably these saints were the patrons of the donor and sundry members of his family. Sometimes, indeed, the donor himself is represented as assisting at the scene: for example, in the Ghirlandajo, or again in a representation of this same subject by Rogier van der Weyden, a Flemish artist, in the gallery at Turin, where the person who presents the picture looks on in adoration. More frequently, how-



THE VISITATION, WITH SAINTS: *The Academy, Florence.*

PACCHIAROTTO

THE VISITATION

ever, the donor and his family are represented by their patron saints. Thus the figure kneeling on the right, with the fetters in his hands, is known by that peculiar mark to be St. Leonard ; whence we may with great probability infer that Leonardo was a family name in the household of the donor. So again the bishop behind, with the three balls in his hand, I take to be St. Nicholas of Bari, the same saint who appears with the same tokens in the Blenheim Madonna, by Raphael, in the National Gallery : it is possible, accordingly, that the picture was partly paid for by a Niccolo, or that the donor had received some spiritual or temporal benefit through the intercession of St. Nicholas. In any case, the assemblage of saints in such a picture is never accidental : wherever we can trace the whole history of the work, we always find every one of the figures is there for a good and sufficient reason. To take an example from early Flemish art, one of the most wholly satisfactory pictures in the National Gallery (Room XI., No. 1045) is a Gerard David of a Canon and his patron saints, from the Collegiate Church of St. Donatien at Bruges. The Canon's name was Bernardino de Salviatis ; therefore the principal saint is St. Bernardino of Siena. The church was St. Donatien's ; therefore the second saint is Donatien in person. The Canon was an almoner ; therefore the third saint is St. Martin, who shared his coat with the beggar. I will recur to this subject when we come to examine the common representation of the Madonna *con vari Santi*,—Our

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Lady surrounded by just such a group of holy personages.

If you have a commission for a "Visitation" alone, you paint a "Visitation," and nothing but it; if you have a commission for a "Visitation with various saints," of course you fulfil your employer's order. This distinction is very well seen in the next "Visitation" to which I will direct your attention—the beautiful and graceful one by Mariotto Albertinelli which now hangs in the gallery of the Uffizi at Florence. If you cut out the centre of Pacchiarotto's work, omitting the saints and the top of the triumphal arch, you have, in essence, the composition of Albertinelli's. Compare the two with Giotto or with any of the intermediate forms which you find at Florence, at Siena, or at Perugia, and you will notice at once the close likeness of type in the two later paintings. Thus both Pacchiarotto and Albertinelli give their Virgin and their St. Elisabeth a sort of snood or hood, which is absent in Giotto's treatment. The face of St. Elisabeth has many features in common in all the three: it is modelled on a single original conception, no doubt Byzantine; but while the Sienese painter represents both faces three-quarters towards the spectator, in the three Florentines, Giotto, Ghirlandajo, and Albertinelli, they are both in profile. The Florentine painters, too, resemble one another more closely in the nature of the embrace; though Albertinelli combines the clasping arms of Giotto with the grasped hands of the Sienese artist. Other varying points of resemblance and difference, with their curious



THE VISITATION : *Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

MARIOTTO ALBERTINELLI

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cross-relations, I leave to the reader himself to determine, lest I should grow tedious. I will only add this, that the longer one compares such successive pictures of different schools, the more do strange points of likeness and diversity come out between them.

Albertinelli's picture is extremely interesting to us from another point of view. Its painter is but a second-rate figure in the mighty age of Florentine art which included Leonardo, Michael Angelo, Raphael. Indeed, if we count Andrea del Sarto and Fra Bartolommeo as setting the standard for the second class, we shall have to relegate Albertinelli to the third rank of importance. Yet such is the power of the great epochs of art to beget noble work, that men of this third order, inspired by the teaching and companionship of the giants of their age, often blossom out unexpectedly into such isolated masterpieces as this "Visitation" or Ridolfo Ghirlandajo's "Miracles of St. Zenobio." So in the great age of Venetian art a Paris Bordone or a Rocco Marconi often astonishes us with a "Doge and Fisherman" or a "Descent from the Cross" of surpassing magnificence. Albertinelli was a pupil of Fra Bartolommeo, who is said, indeed (on what authority I know not), to have designed the original cartoon from which this picture was painted. It richly deserves, however, Burckhardt's commendation of being composed "with real feeling for harmony," and being a work "of which only the greatest master could be capable." It is, as Hare calls it, "a most simple, grand, and beautiful picture." Indeed, the simplicity

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has resulted in a far more beautiful effect than that produced by the crowded composition of the Sienese master. I would call special attention to the increase of beauty gained by the greater height and space of the open archway, and by the unsymmetrical throwing forward of St. Elisabeth's head and shoulders. Albertinelli's whole management of the space between the sides of the arch is absolutely masterly, and can be best brought out by deliberate comparison of photographs of each with the original of the other. This exquisite work was painted on commission for the congregation of San Martino at Florence.

I have not called attention to the evolution of purely technical details, such as perspective, chiaroscuro, texture, anatomy, treatment of drapery and so forth, because the advance made in these may be partly perceived at once by every observer, while it is partly to be appreciated only by the practical artist or the trained critic. Still less have I dwelt upon questions of colouring or of the medium employed, whether tempera or oil; because these questions can only be adequately discussed before the original pictures, and by those who possess a far greater knowledge of technique than I can pretend to. My treatment is neither pre-Morellian or post-Morellian: it is simply evolutionary. But I think comparison of the various types even in black and white may yield in many cases unexpected results to the student. For example, it is not a mere accident that both in Pacchiarotto's and Albertinelli's treatment the top of the picture is

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rounded. Other like points of detail, such as the steps in the foreground and the parti-coloured marble of the inlaid pavement, I will leave to the ingenuity of my readers to discover.

It is interesting to note, at the same time, that the character of a particular painting is not always a safe guide to its age. A more archaic type of art may sometimes be contemporary with or even subsequent to a more advanced one. Raphael's work is from the beginning more modern in style than Perugino's; yet Perugino outlived his marvellous pupil by several years, and continued to the end of his days to paint in the selfsame Perugesque manner, uninfluenced by the extraordinary development of art which was taking place all round him, through the example of Leonardo, Michael Angelo, and their followers. Indeed, there is a singularly interesting fresco at Perugia, begun by Raphael in early manhood, and completed after Raphael's death by Perugino. In this composition the pupil's work is far more perfect and far more modern in tone than the master's; the young Raphael knew more about the essential principles of art than Perugino could acquire in his whole long lifetime. It is the same in the case of the two artists with whom we have here to deal. Pacchiarotto and Albertinelli were born in the selfsame year; and the Sienese master long outlived his Florentine contemporary. But Pacchiarotto's "Visitation" is distinctly archaic in character; it might have been painted half a century earlier than Albertinelli's. It is important to remember this dis-

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tinction between relative age and relative evolution. Pictures newer in date may be older in style ; and when this is so, for the purposes of our present subject they must be considered as if they belonged to an earlier epoch. Put in one word, Pacchiarotto's work is essentially pre-Raphaelite, Albertinelli's post-Raphaelite.

Furthermore, it is worth while to observe that with the gradual increase of technical power—the advance in drawing, in modelling, in perspective, in chiaroscuro—between Giotto and the great Renaissance painters, there went to some degree a falling off in reality and in underlying naturalness. Albertinelli's figures are, of course, in point of skill and delineation more lifelike than Giotto's Virgin and St. Elisabeth. Their embrace is more real ; the lines of the arm and the folds at the elbow more closely resemble the truths of nature. In matters of technique it were absurd to compare them, save as examples of totally different planes of knowledge. But look at the faces : look at the scene as a whole. You feel that while Albertinelli was concentrating his energies upon the production of a beautiful and graceful picture, Giotto was concentrating *his* energies upon the vivid realisation of a scene which he felt and believed to have actually happened. That homely and aged woman with the deep-lined face and the bent back, who leans forward to embrace the Mother of her Saviour—how true she is ! how vivid ! how genuine ! how unaffected ! In a certain sense there is more actual fidelity to life and humanity in her

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than in the gracefully-hooded and refined lady whose draperies Albertinelli arranges with such delicacy and dignity. There is more earnestness and truth in the gentle attitude of Giotto's Virgin than in the half self-conscious poise and pose of Albertinelli's too meek Madonna. The earlier painter is absorbed in his theme, the later in his art: the earlier is thinking how the Blessed Virgin looked, the later is thinking how he can best dispose two heads and profiles against the background of sky seen through the rounded archway.

This is the Nemesis of progress. As Ruskin has somewhere pithily put it, "In early times, art was employed for the display of religious facts; in later times, religious facts were employed for the display of art." And in the almost equally striking words of Morelli, "When a nation's culture has reached its culminating point, grace comes to be valued more than character." I think it is impossible to compare Giotto's "Visitation" with Albertinelli's and not to see that, while the earlier artist thinks of character before everything, grace is the one absorbing concern of the later one.

The five specimens given here fairly exhaust the chief types in the presentation of their subject. Most others are mere transcripts of the central ideas embodied in these pictures. For example, there is an "Annunciation" by Girolamo del Pacchia in the Academy at Siena, with Mary and Elisabeth in the background, which is almost a direct reproduction of

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Albertinelli's picture. I may add that the student will always do well to look for these little episodes in the background of main themes, which often aid in forming a clear conception of the evolution of a subject. They are introduced as a rule without the slightest regard to historical sequence, merely in order to diversify the composition.

Our National Gallery has no "Visitation" of any importance for purposes of comparison; but the tourist in Italy will find many examples of no small interest from our present standpoint. An excellent specimen of the Venetian mode of treating the subject will be found in the picture in the Accademia at Venice usually described as the earliest work of Titian, though Sir J. Crowe denies that it can have been painted by that master at any stage in his evolution. In any case, however, it shows the manner in which the "Visitation" envisaged itself to the rich and luscious Venetian imagination. At Paris there is a further specimen of Ghirlandajo's treatment of this theme in a work at the Louvre, much praised by Kugler; while another good example for comparison is Pontormo's admirable embodiment of the scene in the glass-covered cloisters of the Annunziata at Florence. Nor can I quite pass by, as a Lombard example, Gaudenzio Ferrari's work in the Turin gallery. Finally, the visitor to Assisi should take with him into the Lower Church a photograph of the "Visitation" at Padua for comparison with the other "Visitation" there, attributed by Dobbert, as by Crowe and Cavalcaselle, to Giotto in person. It is

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scarcely more than a repetition of the one in the Madonna dell' Arena; but it contains several more figures and has a more elaborate background, though the action is less free and the draperies stiffer.

III

THE ANNUNCIATION

IN the Pitt-Rivers Anthropological Collection, at the Oxford Museum, many separate objects of human handicraft, such as weapons, pottery, boats, ornaments, and implements, are arranged side by side in the probable order of evolutionary development. In somewhat the same way I am endeavouring here to arrange certain subjects of early Italian painting. Such arrangements are most effective and instructive when a very large number of allied specimens can be placed together in successive rows, in sufficiently close connection to get rid entirely of the idea of breaks, and to show a practically imperceptible gradation of forms which shade off by slow degrees into one another. The evolution of the knife, the hatchet, the arrowhead, the spear, can thus be traced in detail through hundreds of specimens.

In art, such collections of examples in every stage of development are difficult to procure, and still more difficult to reproduce, owing to their size, variety, number, and complexity. Sometimes the total tale of surviving specimens is relatively small; as in the case of the Sposalizio, only a few dozen treatments of which now remain, all told, and those for the most part

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in Italy itself, where alone they can be compared to any advantage. Even these few are chiefly frescoes, only a very small number of easel-pictures of the subject having ever been painted. But with our next subject, the Annunciation, the case is quite different. Here, it would be possible for a diligent inquirer to make a collection of many hundreds of examples; and the difficulty is rather that of selection and reproduction from so vast a number. Even a single Northern museum, like our own National Gallery, will supply the student with several interesting examples for comparison; while the churches and palaces of Italy itself would afford materials for years of study. If one could reproduce fifty or a hundred successive "Annunciations" for inspection, side by side, the spectator would gain a clear and consistent view of the evolution of the entire subject. Still better, if it were possible to arrange copies in a long series of divergent rows from a central Byzantine original, the student might follow the variants on that primitive type as they differentiate themselves in the different schools—Tuscan, Umbrian, Lombardic, Ferrarese, and Venetian. All that I can do here, however, is to give a few salient examples out of dozens that occur to me, and thereby to suggest a line of study which may be undertaken in detail by readers for themselves in London and Paris, in Munich, Venice, Milan, Florence, Siena.

The subject-matter of the Annunciation is taken, of course, from the Gospel according to St. Luke. "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God

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unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured! the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." The moment chosen for the representation of the Annunciation is always the one when the essential words, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured!" are being spoken to the Blessed Virgin. The inscription "Ave Maria gratia plena" often appears on a scroll in the angel's hands; sometimes, as in the Duccio in the National Gallery, the Madonna holds a book inscribed with the words, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son."

As regards the formal elements of the composition, I would mention first that the action almost invariably takes place in a loggia—an arcade or cloister. Quite invariably, too, the angel Gabriel occupies the left-hand side and the Blessed Virgin the right-hand side of the picture. In almost all cases a lectern or reading-desk (perhaps rather a *prie-dieu*) stands in front of or beside the Madonna. The angel usually holds in one hand in early works a sceptre; later on this is replaced by a spray of the common white garden lily—the Annunciation lily, as it is still called in Italy. These are the chief necessary elements of the scene; other points, which vary more from picture to picture, will come out in our subsequent description of individual examples.

THE ANNUNCIATION

In many early specimens the heavens are opened ; a hand or a glory, or even the Eternal Father in person, appears in the sky ; and a dove, representing of course the Holy Spirit, descends from this point towards the heart or head of the Virgin. This feature is admirably seen in a quaintly beautiful though very much decorated Carlo Crivelli in the National Gallery (Room VIII., No. 739). As a rule the dove descends in a ray of light, which enters the loggia through a window on one side ; and even when the dove itself is wanting, this heavenly ray frequently forms a marked element in the picture. The angel Gabriel's wings are generally composed, in the earlier works, of peacocks' feathers ; in later ones, they tend to be either white or rosy. In most cases the angel is entering somewhat hastily as if from without, and behind him is seen an open-air background of landscape or city. This vista often occupies the centre of the picture. The Virgin, on the other hand, sits or kneels in the interior of the loggia, frequently with a bedchamber opening out behind her. One curious feature found in many "Annunciations," and more or less present in all under various disguises, is this : the Madonna is to a greater or less extent distinctly separated by a wall or partition from the announcing angel. Ruskin, in discussing the Carlo Crivelli in the National Gallery, already mentioned, throws out the idea that, as Mary is there represented kneeling in her chamber, while the angel is invisible to her in the court outside, this treatment "may be intended to suggest that the angel appeared to her in a

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dream." But if we examine a large number of instances, we shall see that such an explanation, besides its inherent improbability in the ages of faith (when Scripture facts were accepted in the most literal sense), fails to cover the majority of the cases. For while in some instances the wall is continuous, in others it is broken by a door or archway, and in yet others again is merely represented by a colonnade or row of pillars. I shall suggest hereafter an explanation of this singular feature which seems to me at once more reasonable and more evolutionary.

The earliest "Annunciation" to which I shall call special attention here is Giotto's, in the Madonna dell' Arena at Padua. As far as possible I illustrate Giotto's work from the little Paduan church, because there, more than anywhere else, critics seem to agree that we have the undoubted handicraft of the master; and also because almost every one of the subjects I have selected for treatment in the present series is there represented. But in the chapel of the Arena, the group of the Annunciation is not treated in a single coherent picture; it is made the subject of two separate frescoes. These frescoes are divided from one another by the intervention of the choir arch; the angel of the Annunciation kneels to the left of the arch; the Madonna kneels, facing him, to the right, but separated from him by the whole width of the choir. It is in this peculiarity, I believe, that we must trace the origin of the wall or barrier which so often marks off the figure of the Virgin from that of the angel Gabriel.

THE ANNUNCIATION : *Madonna dell' Arena, Padua.*



THE ANNUNCIATION

In order to understand this point, again, we must look back to a curious architectural use of the Annunciation. Over the principal portal of almost every church in Paris, from Notre Dame and St. Germain l'Auxerrois to the tympanum of the Madeleine, you will find a sculptured relief of the Resurrection and the Last Judgment. Throughout Northern France (as for example again at St. Denis and Amiens) this relief was considered the proper one for the decoration of the main doorway of churches. In Italy, on the other hand, the Annunciation was the subject always so employed at the entrance of churches. For instance, we find it in the mosaic by Ghirlandajo over the north door of the Cathedral at Florence. Most often, however, the Annunciation is employed for this purpose in the form of a divided relief, on either side of the principal door,—the angel to the left, the Madonna to the right, and the doorway between them. It may so be seen in half the churches of Italy; every one will remember it, to particularise a well-known case, on the front of the Lower Church at Assisi. North of the Alps, even, the usage was not uncommon; and an example survives (restored, of course) on the west front of Salisbury Cathedral.

From this architectural use, so common that, once it is pointed out to you, you will see it everywhere, it came about, as I think, that the Annunciation grew to be regarded as the proper subject for the decoration of the blank space beside an archway. At any rate, from a very early age, both inside churches and outside

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them, reliefs and frescoes of the Annunciation are constantly so represented, with the figures separate and divided from one another by the empty space of the intervening archway. Hence arose a custom of dividing the treatment, as it were, into two separate halves, which are regarded as having little or nothing to do with one another. In a Fra Bartolommeo at the Uffizi in Florence the picture is actually cut in two as panels of a shutter; while in a Paolo Veronese, in the same collection, the Madonna and angel are separated from one another by the whole width of a quite empty corridor.

To return to our Giotto: the two halves of this divided picture are strictly symmetrical, and in each the loggia where the Annunciation takes place is represented by two little projecting arcaded boxes, like the *loges* of a theatre. To the left is the angel, half kneeling, with unusually fine sweeps of drapery for Giotto, quite unlike the straight up-and-down folds of his predecessors; a scroll is in Gabriel's hand, originally inscribed, no doubt, "Ave Maria, gratia plena," though these words are (to my eyes at least) no longer legible. Round his head is the usual solid-rayed Giottesque halo; pencils of light radiate on every side around him. To the right, the Madonna, with a similar halo, receives his salutation in the same attitude. Her hands (ill drawn) are devoutly clasped on her breast, in a position which already was or became conventional. In front of her is the usual *prie-dieu*, or reading-desk. Rays of glory from an unseen source fall on her face from



THE ANNUNCIATION : *Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

NERI DI BICCI

THE ANNUNCIATION

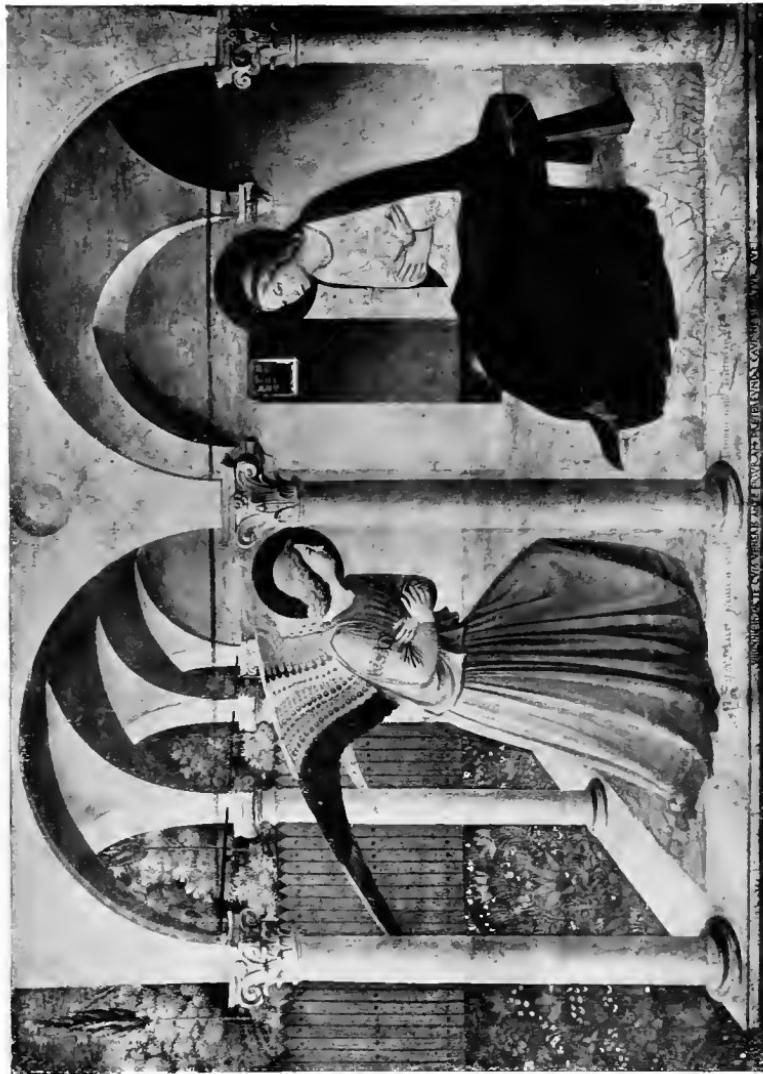
behind one of the boxes which form the loggia. Her features are sweet and resigned, but have none of that air of fear and astonishment which Vasari tells us Giotto gave to the Virgin in an "Annunciation" he painted at Florence. However, there is a Giottesque "Annunciation" in the Uffizi which fully makes up for any such deficiency; I commend it to the attention of those who wish to see the rudest work of this school in its first vain struggles after the expression of emotion.

Subsequent pictures of the Annunciation are exceedingly common, and fall at once into three main types. In the first place the subject was often employed alone, inside or outside the principal portal of churches, or divided in the same way on either side of the choir arch. In the second place it formed, as a fresco, one of the common series both of the Life of Christ and the Life of the Virgin. In the third place it was often the theme of a votive picture or altar-piece, especially as one of the series known as the "Seven Joys of Mary." This diversity of use fully accounts for the frequency of the subject.

An "Annunciation" by Neri de' Bicci, also in the Uffizi, of which I give an illustration, is a fair specimen of the types of these earlier easel pictures. I introduce it here out of chronological order because it really represents a pure survival of the Giottesque model in a later generation. It contains a double colonnade like a small cloister; this double colonnade recurs in many Giottesque pictures, and is essentially similar in

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type (though not in architectural order) to that in the Paolo Veronese already mentioned. To the extreme left is a door by which the angel would appear to have entered; above it stands a little window, through which in many instances (though not in this) a ray of light falls on the Blessed Virgin. Gabriel advances with hands clasped on his breast, a common later alternative to the saluting attitude of Giotto's angel: notice his peacock wings, and the delicate pattern on his robe and fluttering ribbons. He is erect, not kneeling. To the right is the Madonna, seated, with hooded head, and hands uplifted in an attitude of astonishment. There is no reading-desk, but a book lies on her lap; the management of her halo is less adroit than in Giotto's treatment. Behind her hangs a curtain—which is also a feature of Giotto's picture; a little to her right, through an open door, we get the remote suggestion of a bedroom. Above, the heavens are opened, and the Eternal Father, in a circle of radiant glory, with outstretched hands, looks down upon His handmaid. Rays from His breast fall in the direction of the Virgin's bosom: a dove is descending on them, as on a path of light, towards the Mother of the Saviour. Through the open door to the left, and through the arcade behind the angel, we obtain vistas of a formal landscape, with trees and terraces in incorrect perspective. These trees and terraces are conventional features. Neither in this picture nor in Giotto's treatment is there any white lily. Otherwise, Neri's work, in spite of its date, may be accepted



LIFE: ANNUNCIATION: *The Master of San Marco, Venice.*

FRA ANGELICO

THE ANNUNCIATION

as a very central and typical specimen of an early "Annunciation."

Fra Angelico's treatment, in that lovely fresco on the walls of San Marco, is in some ways simpler, yet far more beautiful than Bicci's. As before, the scene is a cloister, not wholly unlike that of the Frate's own monastery, but still more closely resembling the court of the church of the Annunziata at Florence. The columns and arches are handled with a great advance in technical skill on the early Giottesque, and their capitals deserve no little study. Observe also the comparatively realistic garden on the left—the nailed palings, the trees of the background. The angel has just entered from this garden front; he is dropping on one knee, with hands folded over his breast, as in Neri's picture and so many others by the earlier painters. Notice the peacock wings, divided, as in many later instances, into distinct parallel belts or regions. Notice also the embroidery on his sleeve and bosom, a feature which recurs in several other Gabriels. As to his face, that is girlish and Fra Angelico all over; it breathes the very spirit of that peaceable convent. To the right, the Virgin is seated on a rough wooden stool; her aspect is troubled; her arms are folded on her breast; but the disposition of her robe is almost identical with that of Bicci's picture. (Compare also the easel picture attributed to Fra Angelico, and lately added to the National Gallery, Room II., No. 1406.) There is point in even so minute a correspondence as the cut of her inner garment at

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the neck—a detail which may be observed again and again in Tuscan and Umbrian “Annunciations.” To her right, as with Bicci, a door opens to a bedchamber, as simple and bare as one of the little whitewashed cells at San Marco; the tiny window is there, though no ray pours through it. Comparison of the loggias and windows in these first three examples is full of instructiveness. But Fra Angelico’s Madonna is not reading; his angel holds no lily; and no hint appears of the dove descending upon the chosen maiden.

Our next example is the exceedingly beautiful “Annunciation” by Filippo Lippi in the National Gallery, Room II., No. 666. The original being, in this case, so very accessible to English readers, I will enter into fuller details than usual with regard to its composition. The picture is painted to fill a lunette, and therefore the loggia can only be indicated, instead of being represented in full, as in Fra Angelico’s fresco. For the same reason the figures are almost necessarily represented as kneeling and sitting, because there would have been no room for them to stand up erect in so small an area. Lippi’s even more beautiful and brilliant companion picture, in the same room, also lunette-shaped, similarly represents the Medici family saints as seated on a bench in a dainty and exquisite garden. (Go and look at both in Room II., next time you are passing the National Gallery.) St. Cosmas and St. Damian are there—the blessed physicians, who were patrons, of course, of the whole Medici family, and more particularly of Cosmo de’

THE ANNUNCIATION: *National Gallery, London.*



THE ANNUNCIATION

Medici, who founded its greatness: you may know them by their red gowns and boxes of ointment. St. Lawrence is there, with his gridiron, to represent Lorenzo; and St. Francis with the stigmata; and St. Anthony to balance him; with St. Peter Martyr, proud as ever of the signs of his martyrdom. These two pictures were painted, in fact, for Cosmo de' Medici, and no doubt filled originally the spaces over doorways in his villa near Fiesole. They were therefore necessarily conditioned by the size of the interval between door and ceiling, so that only short seated figures could be introduced into them. I mention this fact because you will always find several treatments of a subject like the Annunciation, each equally persistent, but differing among themselves according as the space to be filled was a wall for a fresco, a lunette above a door, or a panel in an altar-piece. And note once more the prevalence of the feeling that the Annunciation is a subject especially fitted for placing above a doorway. The particular picture with which we are now engaged has Cosmo de' Medici's crest, three feathers tied together in the Medici ring, on the pedestal of the parapet which supports the vase with the Annunciation lilies.

Except in so far as the necessities of space compel, the resemblance of Filippo Lippi's picture to Bicci's and Fra Angelico's is very close in every particular. Of course the sweet boyish angel is beautiful and graceful, with a robust beauty and a vigorous gracefulness which Lippi could compass far more fully than

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any of his predecessors. But the details are still surprisingly based upon earlier pictures. Gabriel has the same peacock wings, the same ornaments on his robes, the same embroidered yoke and wristbands and sleeve-pieces. Even the scintillating jewel on his breast, scattering rays of light, is precisely the same as in earlier pictures. He kneels in a flowery garden which recalls Angelico; behind are the same trees, the same marble terraces as in Bicci's picture. He bears for the first time in our series (though not by any means in the history of art) the Annunciation lily, which is duplicated in the vase on the exquisite parapet. (Compare here the Duccio in the National Gallery, Room II., No. 1139.) Notice that the vase is inaccurately drawn, especially at the bottom. The Madonna is seated, as often, on a raised dais; a book lies on her lap, as in Bicci's treatment; to her right is a bedchamber and the entrance to the doorway; the curtain at her back still remains conspicuous. But observe how different are the rich decorative details which Lippi, painting for his wealthy patron, throws into the scene, from the monastic bareness and ascetic feeling of Fra Angelico's background. One is ornate and elaborate, as becomes the palace of the wealthy Medici; the other simple and severe, as becomes the Dominican cloisters of San Marco. Nothing could be more redolent of the two artists' spirits.

The earlier painters often represented the dove as launched by the Eternal Father, visible in His glory. With Lippi the conception reaches a higher point of



THE ANNUNCIATION : *Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

BOTTICELLI

THE ANNUNCIATION

poetry and reticence : only a hand is seen issuing from a cloud above, and the dove descends upon the Virgin's lap in faintly-marked concentric rings of radiance. Other points of resemblance and difference, too numerous to mention, the student can observe for himself by close inspection of the original pictures. Indeed, I will here repeat what I have already said, that the best way to pursue this study is to accumulate photographs of many representations of a single subject, and compare them with other originals in the churches or galleries where they actually occur.

The Botticellian "Annunciation," in the Uffizi, differs more widely than any of its predecessors from the established model. It is marked, indeed, by more than the usual amount of Botticellian affectation. (And in saying this, I hope I shall not be misunderstood ; for I am a sworn admirer of the greatest of the Florentines, though my admiration does not blind me to the fact of his occasional lapse into extremes of his own good qualities.) We have still the loggia, or something like it ; still the square inlaid pavement of Filippo Lippi's treatment ; still the garden, with its marble parapet ; and still one tree, which does duty as a last relic for the grove of the earlier painters. But the background is now a wide Italian landscape ; the angel's wings have ceased to be made up of peacock's feathers, and are rather swanlike ; his halo is managed with more artistic skill ; his hair, his flowing robes, his pellucid veil, his attitude, his expression, are unmixed Botticelli. Those diaphanous tissues were dear to the spiritual painter's

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soul. The lily is still there, no longer stiff and straight, but curved in accordance with Botticelli's instinct. Compare the folded hands of Bicci's or Fra Angelico's Gabriel with the two open fingers of Lippi's charming angel, and the expressive and dainty outspread hand of Botticelli's earnest seraph, fully conscious of the momentous message he bears to the Virgin. This treatment of the hand is peculiarly Botticellian; he loves to twist fingers into curiously graceful, yet somewhat affected attitudes. Lippi's Gabriel is placid and composed; Botticelli's has hurried through space, his veil still flying, and is big with the mighty news he bears to humanity. His tone is ineffable in plain English prose; Rossetti might have expressed it. As for the Madonna, her attitude is Botticelli in his most characteristic moment; yet even here, transfigured as she is by the ascetic painter's volcanic imagination, we recognise the cloak, the collar, the embroideries, the book and reading-desk of earlier representations. But the dove has disappeared; to Botticelli the tale has become spiritualised and etherealised.

Very different indeed is the conception of the Annunciation by that decorative, half Venetian, half Paduan painter, Carlo Crivelli, in the interesting though overloaded picture which hangs on the walls of the Paduan room at the National Gallery, Room VIII., No. 379. I reproduce it here in full, but it is impossible to form a proper conception of the extraordinary mass of detail, far beyond even what is usual with Crivelli, from a reproduction on such a small scale.



THE ANNUNCIATION : *National Gallery, London.*

CARLO CRIVELLI

THE ANNUNCIATION

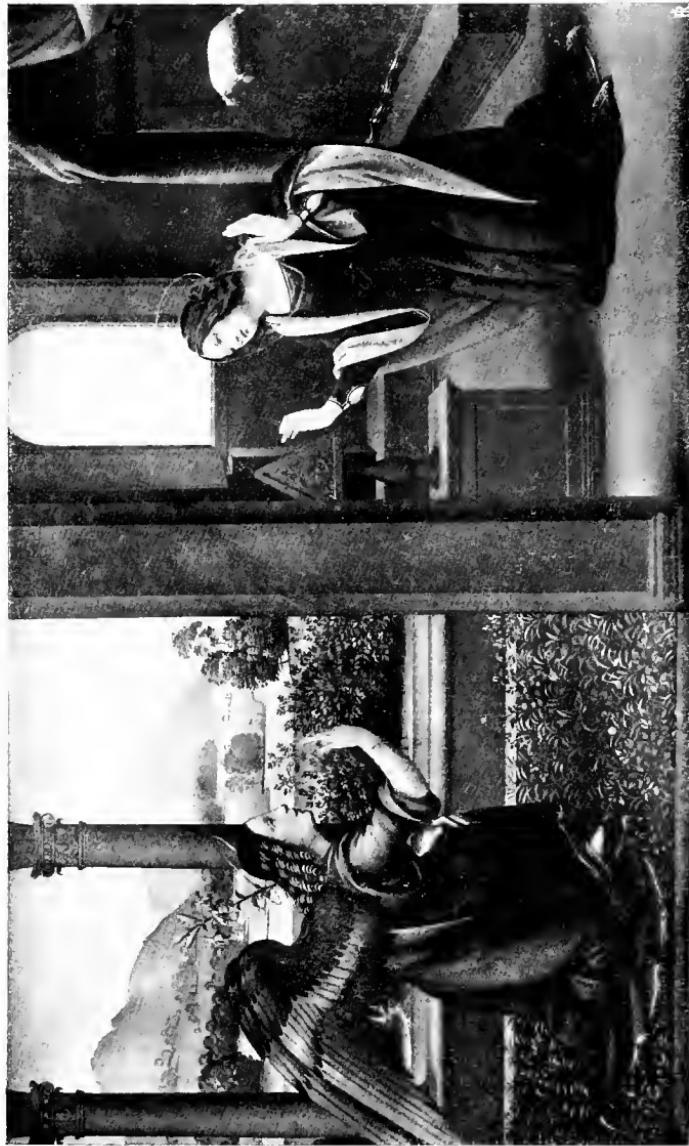
Readers interested in the subject must look at it for themselves in Trafalgar Square. It is a labyrinth of wholly extraneous ornament. In Lippi's and Botticelli's treatment, which form the final flower and pure efflorescence of the Tuscan ideal, the angel and the Madonna constitute, as it were, the entire picture : they fill the foreground ; the rest, beautiful as it is, serves merely for background to the figures, as it ought to do. But in Crivelli, who was rather a painter of fruit, flowers, and decorative adjuncts than of truly religious scenes, the background *is* the picture ; the figures are there as scarcely more than accessories. His whole soul revelled in jewellery and upholstery. To the right, as ever, we have the Madonna, with her crossed hands, kneeling at her reading-desk, a book open before her. On her right, again, is the open bedchamber ; the curtain still hangs much as in Giotto's embodiment. From the glory in the heavens the dove descends in a ray of light, through a little round-arched window, on the head of the Madonna. Without, in the street, and separated from her as usual by that strange dividing wall, kneels the angel Gabriel. In figure and feature he is very unlike the Florentine angels : there is a definiteness and precision about him, a sharpness and clearness of outline, which recalls Mantegna and the school of Squarcione. Yet, with all the difference in type between the two angelic conceptions, observe still the wings, divided as of old into definite regions ; observe the white lily, the jewel on the breast, the curious shoulder-ornaments, as in Lippi's representation, only

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twisted, Crivelli-fashion, into marvellous foliation : observe the floating ribbons which recall Neri de' Bicci, and which were etherealised by Botticelli into his cloud-like drapery. By the angel's side, a mere spectator of the scene, kneels Emidius, the patron saint of Ascoli, holding in his hand a model of the city. (Ascoli is a town on the Adriatic where Crivelli passed the greater part of his life, and where he painted for a local commission this picture, with its aggressive and speaking motto of *Libertas Ecclesiastica*.)

But these figures, as I say, though essential to the work from the point of view of the patrons who commissioned it, were merely its occasion from the point of view of that extraordinarily painstaking and detail-loving creature, its painter. Of course there are an apple and a gourd in the foreground : Crivelli could do nothing without fruit and flowers. Of course, also, there is endless profusion of decorative work : elaborate arabesques on the pilasters of the Madonna's lordly house ; elaborate capitals, elaborate loggias, an elaborate cornice. The grain of the wood on her reading-desk is carefully painted ; so are the planks in the wall of her bedchamber. Observe her dainty bodice, her jewelled hair, her counterpane ; her decorative pillows, the pattern on her curtain, the fretted plaster-work on the diapered ceiling : notice the peacock above, the relief behind him, the open arcade with its gorgeous roof ; the dove, the caged bird, the rug, the basin of flowers, the jug with the plant in it. Notice even the cherubs on the side of the house towards the street and the

THE ANNUNCIATION: Uffizi Gallery, Florence.



THE ANNUNCIATION

angel. And then observe that we have still in the background the steps, the trees, the formal garden. How Paduan is the medallion of a Cæsar by the arch ! how Venetian the quaint touch of everyday life in the figure of the chubby child who peeps round the corner ! Besides the endless interest of its decorative work, this picture is useful as marking the difference between the spiritual and ideal motives which dominated Florence, and the worldly motives of richness and splendour which dominated Venice. Do not omit to go and look at it, and compare its purely adventitious detail with the poetical background of Filippo Lippi's "Annunciation." In the Florentine, the detail is there for the sake of the picture ; in the Venetian, the picture is there for the sake of the detail.

Lorenzo di Credi's "Annunciation," once more in the Uffizi, is a grateful relief from the tweedledum and tweedledee of Crivelli's elaborate and too ornate treatment. The Florentine painter gives us a Gabriel more fully in accordance with Renaissance sentiment. His face is gentle and slightly Leonardesque ; his hair hangs in curls less vagrant than Botticelli's ; he is calm and restrained with the restraint that is habitual in all Lorenzo's painting. No passion here, but the calm and masterful work of a consummate craftsman. Gabriel kneels as of old in a flowery garden ; behind him is the loggia, the colonnade, the marble parapet. But beyond, the landscape has become increasingly naturalistic : it resembles in general effect the upper valley of the Arno. The angel's wings still display distinct regions, as of

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old ; his left hand holds the Annunciation lily ; his halo has dwindled to a mere floating ring, seen in accurate perspective. The uplifted right hand seems to beckon the Madonna. The drapery has lost its mediæval ornament, and is fairly on the way to the mere massive folds and textureless tissues of later painters. In early times much pains are spent over the accurate representation of particular stuffs ; from Leonardo onwards the robes are nothing more than abstract sheets of indeterminate fabrics. Between Gabriel and the Madonna spreads that mysterious wall of partition, just pierced by a door, as one may see from the light on the floor in front of Our Lady. The Virgin herself, to the right as always, kneels at her reading-desk, with the bed-chamber behind, and the curtain and the window. But her attitude is one which would have been wholly impossible to earlier painters : partly reminiscent of Botticelli, the hands are yet free alike from the affected twist which he gives to fingers, and from the lifeless stiffness of preceding artists. As a whole this picture is an admirable example of Lorenzo di Credi's art : its simplicity, when compared with the mediæval detail of most previous "Annunciations," is immediately obvious. But it also illustrates in an admirable degree the curious tendency to represent the "Annunciation" as consisting of two equal and parallel pictures.

This peculiarity is even more noticeable in the divided panels by Fra Bartolommeo in the Uffizi, which carry the twofold arrangement of the subject to a singular pitch nowhere else observable. Here



THE ANNUNCIATION: *Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*



FRA BARTOLOMMEO

THE ANNUNCIATION

we have the same simple portal as in Lorenzo di Credi's picture, and somewhat the same disposition of the daïs and the bedchamber. The angel bears still the Annunciation lily, but, to say the truth, he is employed for the most part as a mere study in drapery. The Madonna kneels gracefully by her shadowy reading-desk, with book half open in her hand; the curtain and other essential properties are there, as usual. But virtue has gone out of the thing; it is no longer really the Mother of the Saviour, but an Academy model in an admirably arranged mantle. The affected pose of the left hand, half reminiscent as it is of earlier attitudes, has now something theatrical and unreal about it. You feel in a second that Fra Bartolommeo is not trying to produce an impression of a scene which he believes to have actually occurred, but is concentrating his energies on drawing a couple of figures in graceful poses and with correct draperies. The art of the thing is all in all to him—the event is nothing; and in becoming thus conscious, the art itself has lost half its charm for us. Better Neri de' Bicci's simple, childlike faith, than the Frate's conscientious and conscious efforts to be before all things an artist.

As an example of the final stage in the evolution of the subject at the high tide of the Renaissance, I would select an "Annunciation" by Paolo Veronese in the Venetian room of the Uffizi. This picture is interesting for the most part only by way of contrast. Its angel is a well-developed Venetian model, as

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little angelic as one can easily conceive, remarkable chiefly for his fine and somewhat too exuberant physical development, like a Titian gone to seed and lapsed into pure voluptuousness. He might have sat for a Bacchus or a young Silenus. Save that he wears a pair of somewhat perfunctory wings, and still carries by pure force of habit an Annunciation lily, nobody would ever know him for an angelic messenger. On the opposite side kneels a Venetian lady, full-faced and amply developed, in the character of the Madonna. Fra Angelico, or even Bellini, would have hesitated to represent Our Lady as such a mere fashionable Venetian beauty; but Paolo Veronese had no such scruples. He treated the Annunciation, or any other sacred scene, only as an opportunity for the display of a charming and anything but spiritual model. Both angel and Madonna are thoroughly theatrical; and, except for its name, and the conventions in its treatment, there is nothing at all of sacred art in the picture.

Yet, even in Veronese's voluptuous scene, observe how many traces still remain to us of the traditional "Annunciation." The past died hard. The action takes place in a loggia or colonnade, no longer mediæval, but frankly and obtrusively classical, with fluted columns, and volutes on the capitals of the distant pilasters. Gabriel is still separated from the Blessed Virgin by an empty space, here specially marked by the intervention of two rows of columns. At his back are reminiscences of the old formal garden



'THE ANNUNCIATION: Uffizi Gallery, Florence.'

PAOLO VERONESE

THE ANNUNCIATION

and the trees and marble terraces which long formed the necessary elements of the pictorial legend. Even the traditional black-and-white marble floor, in alternate squares, has not been forgotten; nor the vista behind, nor the Madonna's clasped hands, nor the book, nor the reading-desk, nor the uplifted finger of the announcing archangel. From the centre above, the glory of the Eternal Father still shines from the clouds; and in the place of the concentric rings of light of earlier painters, little cherubs are descending (almost playfully) upon the Virgin Mother. Veronese has tried to the best of his comprehension to realise the scene in much the same terms as earlier art realised it. But oh, in how different, in how debased a spirit!

For it is all a vain pretence. He was not painting, he could never paint, a real "Annunciation." The great Venetian colourist was perfectly at home in such scenes as the "Family of Darius before Alexander" in our National Gallery (Room IX., No. 294), or the "Supper at Cana of Galilee" in the Louvre, which is really a sumptuous banquet in a rich man's house, far fitter to grace an imperial dining-hall than the refectory of a monastery, for which purpose it was painted. His work at the Doge's Palace is admirable for its object—large, princely, expansive, begotten of ancient wealth and the spacious family and ceremonial life of a mighty, aristocratic, commercial city. But when he comes to try his hand at an "Annunciation," there is nothing of saintly, nothing of pure or virginal

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in his vulgar conception. The angel is just a handsome theatrical messenger ; the Madonna just a beautiful and voluptuous Venetian lady. Purity and humility are the very last attributes one would dream of associating with her. The deceitfulness of riches had corrupted and destroyed Venetian painting : art committed suicide by becoming a mere appanage of wealth and worldly splendour.

Other “Annunciations” exist in the National Gallery which it will be well worth the reader’s while to compare on the spot with the Lippi and the Crivelli. One by Duccio of Siena gives an interesting idea of the subject as treated by that pioneer of original art in Tuscany. Another, in the Umbrian room, by Giannicolo Manni (Room VI., No. 1104), Perugino’s pupil, who painted the chapel of the Cambio at Perugia, well illustrates the later Umbrian style, and has some quaint arabesques on the Virgin’s reading-desk, very characteristic of their painter. Some singular examples, most strangely divided, may be seen in the Early Tuscan room in the Gallery. I need not mention the Fra Bartolommeo at the Louvre, nor the exquisite Andrea del Sarto at the Pitti Palace—perhaps the loveliest embodiment of the scene we are considering by any painter of the High Renaissance. These and countless other examples will occur at once to all readers who have seen them ; and the specimens already described will suffice, I think, to convey an idea of the chief types of treatment in the Florentine school at least, if not in the sister provinces.



THE ANNUNCIATION : *Pitti Gallery, Florence.*

ANDREA DEL SARTO

THE ANNUNCIATION

For those who desire to make a collection of illustrative photographs, there is no better subject to begin upon than the "Annunciation." It is more varied and more interesting in type than the "Madonna and Child"; its evolution is more marked; and the theme exists in almost equal numbers of examples. Copies may be collected and arranged according to schools and affiliation, with a cross-division into frescoes and easel-paintings, separate or united compositions, and lunettes or arch-pieces. Photographs of sculptured "Annunciations," architectural or otherwise, and of others in mosaic, della Robbia ware, and so forth, will help to make the collection completer. A good arrangement of one or two such groups of subjects in an accessible room in London would be of untold benefit to students of evolution in design and composition.

IV

THE MADONNA AND CHILD

THE evolution of the Madonna is a far more subtle and difficult problem than any of those we have hitherto considered in the present chapters. I do not merely mean that the number of Madonnas in existence makes the subject unmanageable, and that a complete collection of specimens representing its treatment in all ages of Italian art must extend to at least several thousand examples. From one point of view, this very abundance of material for the history of the type makes the evolutionary treatment of the theme all the easier. It would be possible, indeed, to accumulate copies of various Madonnas so as to form a continuous series which would melt by almost imperceptible gradations from the earliest and rudest efforts of Christian art, through the tender grace of Lippi and Botticelli, to the full flower of the Renaissance, and the progressive insipidity of Correggio, the Caracci, and the eclectic painters. It would be possible, too, so to arrange one's groups of Madonnas in divergent lines as to represent their differentiation into the diverse schools — Florentine, Sienese, Umbrian, Lombard, Paduan, Venetian. Nowhere else is the continuity

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of specimens so perfect; nowhere else is the line of affiliation so clear and so unbroken.

But the simple composition of the Madonna and Child is lacking in that definiteness and variety of circumstance which one gets in most other sacred subjects. A Mother and a Baby—that is all that one can say is essential to the subject. So simple and natural is the little group, indeed, that in the museum at Ghizeh, near Cairo, one may see, side by side, ancient Egyptian representations of Isis and Horus, and early Coptic Christian representations of the Virgin and Child, so closely similar in aspect that only the presence or absence of certain symbolic signs, like the *crux ansata* on the one hand or the alpha and omega on the other, enables one to distinguish the heathen from the Christian figures. Nay, it is even believed that in sundry early transitional images the two merge into one another in inextricable confusion. A Mother and Child, especially if reverently conceived as objects of adoration, can differ but little, relatively speaking, from representation to representation. There are Buddhist examples that an unskilled eye might take for Christian. It is this want of definiteness and symbolic consistency in the very nature of the subject which has led me to postpone its consideration till my readers had gained from more salient types some rough idea of the general principles which underlie the course of artistic evolution in Italy.

Furthermore, while the subject of the Madonna and Child is in itself so simple as to be vague and elusive

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by reason of its very simplicity, it is on the other hand much complicated by the fact that it shades off by degrees on every side into other scenes, whose evolution must be separately traced along lines of their own with equal minuteness. Several *kinds* of Madonnas were popularly recognised as themes for distinct pictures. The central subject consists of the "Madonna and Child" alone, most often represented in three-quarter length, seated. This is the type or starting-point. Most closely allied to it is the figure of the "Madonna Enthroned," generally with a baldacchino or canopy surmounting her head. Next in order of complexity comes the group of the "Madonna and Child with the infant St. John," a subject which admits of greater variety of attitude and dramatic interest than the simpler one of Our Lady with the Holy Infant on her lap or clasped to her bosom. This last group of three passes readily into the familiar subject of the "Holy Family," by the addition of St. Anne, or St. Joseph, or both of them: the Mother and Child; the Father, Mother, and Child; or the Grandmother, Father, Mother, and Child respectively. On a slightly different line of development, representations of the "Madonna and Angels" form a separate system: these may be as varied in type as the mere circle of seraphim round Duccio's Virgin in Santa Maria Novella at Florence on the one hand, and the charming little cherubs with mandoline and guitar, who discourse sweet music to the sleeping babe in that exquisite gem by Alvise Vivarini, in the sacristy of the Redentore at

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Venice, on the other. The "Madonna Enthroned," again, passes readily into the "Madonna in Glory." Another great group of infinite diversity, which I reserve for separate treatment here, is the "Madonna and Saints," where the latter component figures may be infinitely varied in number and character, according to the name or patron of the donor. As to the "Assumption" and the "Coronation of the Virgin," they belong, of course, to wholly different cycles.

This brief enumeration of the principal variants will suffice to show the complexity of the subject. I propose, then, to deal almost exclusively with the theme of the Madonna and Child in its simplest and commonest form of two figures only. Even here, however, great distinctions must be made between the treatment of Our Lady in fresco or on panel, as cabinet picture or altar-piece. In fact, the subtlety and elusiveness of the subject is so great, that on first consideration I was almost inclined to shirk it as an element in our purview. On second thoughts, however, such a course seemed cowardly; and I have decided to include it, if I may so say, experimentally, not because I think I can deal with it at all finally, or do anything like full justice to so vast a subject, but because I may perhaps be able to throw out some general suggestions for a line of observation which the reader must fill in for himself in detail. Besides, as the Madonna and Child form an integral part of many other subjects, such as the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi, it would be impossible to treat of the

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synthetic whole before one had considered the component part analytically.

Traditionally, the earliest representations of the Madonna and Child were painted by St. Luke, the limner evangelist. Several specimens of his reputed handicraft still exist, the most famous of which is the ancient Virgin preserved at the Madonna di San Luca on the hill-top by Bologna—in reality a Byzantine picture of considerable antiquity, brought hither from Constantinople in 1160. Historically, the earliest known Madonnas are those of the Roman catacombs: only once, however, in those primitive monuments, are the Virgin and Child represented as such (in the catacombs of St. Priscilla, where St. Joseph also forms part of the composition in a fresco of the second century, so that strictly speaking this must rather be regarded as a Holy Family); in all other cases the figures of the Wise Men are added, so that the work must be treated in our formal classification as an Adoration of the Magi. For other early Christian Madonnas in Italy we must look chiefly to the mosaics and frescoes of the older churches in Rome, in Ravenna, and in Venice. The study of these ancient mosaics, indeed, is quite beside our present purpose; but I cannot refrain from observing here that, without some knowledge at least of the most primitive forms thus represented, it is impossible to gain a complete conception of the evolution of the thirteenth and fourteenth century Madonnas in Italy. Whoever wishes to follow out the subject in detail should at least compare the earlier mosaics at St. Mark's

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in Venice and in the basilicas of Ravenna with the early Madonnas elsewhere in Italy, and with Duccio's Virgin at Santa Maria Novella in Florence. It should also be noticed that the Madonna plays a far smaller part in early Christian art than is assigned to her from the beginning of the fifth, and still more markedly of the eleventh century.

Our own proper subject, however, must be held to commence with Duccio, from whom we must date the great upward movement in the Italian art of the later middle ages. Up to this time the mystical Byzantine Madonnas, almond-eyed and grave of aspect, were repeated by one artist after another with hardly any alteration ; most of them, indeed, are mere twice-told copies of some old and revered miracle-working original. Gilt backgrounds are universal. A certain strange aloofness and gloominess of expression characterises the faces of these primitive pictures ; the Byzantine artist shrank from giving a smile to Our Lady's lips, and feared to compromise the sanctity of the Divine Child by representing Him as a happy human baby. The oblique Mongolian eyes, the thin and sulky mouth, the sharp and attenuated nose, the stiff wooden attitude, all suggest rather the idea of angry malevolence than of gentleness and benignity. It was from Madonnas such as this that Duccio began to revolt ; and, harsh and severe as his famous Virgin in Santa Maria Novella appears to us nowadays, it was yet to those who saw it for the first time a wonderful revelation of unsuspected possibilities of goodness and sweetness.

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So much has already been written from many points of view about this most epoch-making of pictures that I shall treat of it here in very brief terms only so far as it strictly relates to our own special subject. It hangs in a somewhat gloomy and ill-lighted corner of Santa Maria, the Ruccellai chapel, and can only be seen to advantage in its present position in exceptionally clear and brilliant sunshine; so that visitors to Florence should choose a cloudless spring morning on which to visit it. But originally its dingy colours must have been bright and beautiful. According to the well-known but probably apocryphal story, when Charles of Anjou was passing through Florence, he was taken to inspect this work. All Florence crowded in after him. The people stood awestruck before the revolutionary picture. Nothing like it had yet been seen in Tuscany. When finished, it was carried in solemn procession to the church by the whole population. It is true, the tale has been shown to present some slight historical discrepancies; but it is good evidence at least for the popular feeling that this particular Madonna formed a special turning-point in the history of painting.

“The type,” says Lord Lindsay, “is still the Byzantine—intellectualised, perhaps, yet neither beautiful nor graceful; but there is a dignity and a majesty in her mien, and an expression of inward pondering and sad anticipation rising from her heart to her eyes as they meet yours, which one cannot forget. The Child, too, blessing with its right hand, is full of the Deity, and the first object in the picture—a propriety seldom lost



MADONNA AND CHILD: *Madonna dell'Arena*, Padua.

GIOTTO

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sight of by the older Christian painters. And the attendant angels, though as like as twins, have much grace and sweetness." But I do not think Lindsay does full justice here to the immense advance upon all antecedent Madonnas. His Virgin is more human, more living, more tender, more real than any previous Byzantine model. It has truth and expression. Earlier Madonnas affected their worshippers as cold and stern: Duccio's affected them as gentle and benignant. And if we ourselves feel this at the present day, accustomed as we are to the womanly tenderness which Lippi and Botticelli knew so well how to give to Our Lady's face, how much more must contemporary Florentines have felt it, to whom Our Lady had been hitherto envisaged as an object of terror and of reluctant worship rather than as an object of close personal admiration and devotion! As Ruskin well says, the delight of the thirteenth-century Florentines in Duccio's picture was not merely delight in the revelation of an art they had not known how to practise, but in the revelation of a Madouuna they had not known how to love. Hawthorne, with strange American recklessness, declared it would rejoice his spirit if Duccio's Virgin were removed from the church and reverently burnt. Such a remark shows utter incapacity to understand the real interest and value of historical monuments. It is hopelessly out of tune with evolutionary feeling. I may note in passing that the angels which surround this famous picture show much more spirit and vigour of drawing than the central figures. The Virgin and

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Child were so sacred and so thoroughly conventionalised a type that even Duccio did not dare to vary very greatly from the received conception; with the angels he felt he had a freer hand, and he indulged his fancy accordingly in bolder excursions.

There is another picture in the Belle Arti at Florence, which, though less admirable, is almost a replica (say rather a predecessor) of the Ruccellai picture; but having been removed from Santa Trinità into the full light of a gallery, it can now be far more conveniently studied than its famous rival. The Madonna attributed to Cimabue in our National Gallery (Room III., No. 565) is, if authentic, a somewhat early one of the master's, less pleasing than either of the Florentine examples; but it gives at least a tolerably good idea of the starting-point of the subject during the period of rapid artistic evolution. Its greenish flesh-tints are probably due to fading, which has allowed the green groundwork to show through the surface-painting.

The visitor to the National Gallery will also find a curious example of the rudest and earliest type of Madonna in the picture by Margaritone of Arezzo (Vestibule, No. 564). This is the most archaic and childish in tone of all the works in our national collection.

Giotto's Madonnas, genuine or doubtful, are exceedingly numerous. They show us no little advance upon Duccio's model; though even in fresco, and still more in panel-paintings, they never exhibit anything like the freedom and life of Giotto's vigorous historical subject-pictures. The fresco in the Lower Church of Assisi,



MADONNA AND CHILD : *Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

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for example, still retains something of the fretfulness of Duccio's Virgin ; the hands are ill drawn, and the eyes unsatisfactory ; while the Child has yet somewhat of the stiff grown-up air which Byzantine painters thought necessary to the solemnity of the infant Saviour. The Madonna of the church of the Arena at Padua, again, which is more certainly from the master's own hand, is more pleasing and more natural. The Virgin's face in it has much simplicity and purity ; the Child is comparatively truthful and baby-like ; and the humanity of the two figures is strongly insisted on in the fact that the Madonna is suckling her infant. But the hands, the arms, and the Child's legs are very ill drawn, and the whole composition lacks the freedom and dramatic power of the historical frescoes. Conventionalism still fetters the treatment of the subject. The haloes have the usual Giottesque solidity, and the infant Saviour's is threaded by the Greek cross, prophetic of his future, always assigned to the Persons of the Trinity. Other Giottesque Madonnas, both in Italy and elsewhere, are too numerous to mention. From this Giottesque form, as secondary parent, divergent ideals developed themselves by degrees in the towns of Italy, under the influence of the various environments, aristocratic or republican, maritime, commercial, monastic or mountainous.

Throughout the Florentine school, the gradual evolution of the primitive type continued along lines familiar to most of us. I need not recall here the various advances in the treatment of the subject by

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the Gaddi and their successors, by Fra Angelico and Benozzo Gozzoli, by Filippo Lippi and Filippino and Botticelli, by Ghirlandajo and Cosimo Rosselli, by Leonardo, Michael Angelo, and the mighty Renaissance painters of Florence. Examples abound in every great gallery, in Italy and out of it. To illustrate these in anything like sufficient detail would require many dozen successive pictures. As a specimen of the purest Florentine spirit in its noblest age, I would instance Filippo Lippi's exquisite round Madonna in the Pitti Palace: Our Lady's face in it is said to have been studied from the nun Lucrezia Buti, and it gives us in the most intense form a perfect realisation of the Florentine ideal. This, however, is not quite a simple Madonna and Child from our present point of view, for in the background are represented the Birth of the Virgin, the meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate, and other episodes. Even in our own National Gallery, it is possible to make some study of the evolution of Florentine Madonnas by the aid of the attributed Cimabue, a Benozzo Gozzoli (Room II., No. 283), a Filippo Lippi (Room I., No. 589), a Filippino Lippi (Room I., No. 293), a Botticelli (Room III., No. 275), a Lorenzo di Credi (Room I., No. 593), a Leonardo (Room IV., No. 1093), and several other examples. The Sienese school, more pensive and less stately, is also well represented by several specimens, beginning with an excellent small Duccio (Room II., No. 566), and ending with a touching Pacchia (Room I.,



MADONNA AND CHILD : *Pitti gallery, Florence.*

FRA FILIPPO LIPPI

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No. 246) of most graceful and exquisite execution. In almost all we may note the conventional blue robe of Our Lady, and the bright gilt star on her left shoulder.

The parallel evolution of the Lombard Madonnas is best studied from Milan as a centre. As a whole, this type exhibits less purity and spirituality than the Florentine, with greater graciousness and a certain pleasing air of cultivated life. You would say, a well-read Milanese lady. A refined worldly beauty replaces here the poetic idealism of the Tuscan artists. A large forehead and thoughtful eyes contrast with the shrinking Florentine maiden. This difference can be admirably seen when we compare the mystical Botticelli in the Poldi-Pezzoli Museum at Milan with the sweet and touching but wholly unspiritual Luini which forms one of the principal treasures of the Brera Gallery. It is worth while to note, too, that the long, oval face, the somewhat simpering smile, the broad outlook on the world, are all pure Lombard. The Florentine Leonardo had settled in Milan towards the close of the fifteenth century, and the variants of the *Vierge aux Rochers* in the Louvre and the National Gallery painted by him or under his supervision afford an interesting comparison with the earlier Lombard Madonnas. The distinction between these earlier pictures and the later Lombard Virgins by Luini, Boltraffio, Oggiono, and Solario is also noteworthy. Some tolerable examples occur in the National Gallery. Among the most beautiful of the earlier Lombard Virgins are the gentle, placid, and almost melancholy representations

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by Ambrogio Borgognone, who seems like a silvery northern Fra Angelico, with a touch of Filippino.

I will not dwell at any length upon Mantegna's somewhat hard and scholastic Madonnas, nor on the other works of the Paduan school, which charm us rather by their admirable painting, their "repose and self-control," than by any remarkable poetic beauty. They are noble and serene rather than touching. But in this school, and even in the lesser towns of the Lombardo-Venetian plain, a distinct succession and progression of Madonnas may easily be traced, often of great evolutionary interest. I will recur to this subject in part when I come to deal with the more complicated theme of the Madonnas and Saints; for the present it will suffice to remark in passing that local types of Madonnas may often be observed, even in second-rate towns, which have influenced the work of great painters when locally engaged, as was the case with Mantegna, Luini, Cavozzola, and others.

The Venetian Madonnas, at which we next arrive, rank among the most interesting of the entire series. Beginning at first in very Giottesque examples, marked by the uniformity of all primitive art, they show with the Vivarini some slight approach to their final traits, being solider and more aristocratic than their sisters on the mainland. But it is with Giovanni Bellini and his followers that the type reaches its culminating point. A certain grandeur of mien is their distinguishing mark; it sinks with Titian into mere sumptuous loveliness, and with Veronese into theatrical splen-



MADONNA AND CHILD: *Brera Gallery, Milan.*

LUINI

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dour. In the exquisite works of Bellini's age which abound at Venice, Our Lady is represented with an air of grave and matronly dignity wholly alien to the more natural and girlish Florentine ideal. At Florence the Madonna is a tender, shrinking, and delicate maiden; at Venice she is a calm, serene, and pure-spirited mother. Her face is fuller and rounder and more placid in expression than the Florentine type of the *ancilla domini*: her features are more solemnly modelled, less acute, less dainty. She has a heavier cheek and chin, richer lips, more drooping eyelids. Her head is completely covered, as a rule, by the mantling drapery of a cloak or wimple, which falls in graceful folds on either side of the full neck and shoulders. The neck itself, which in the Florentine representation is slim and girlish, becomes for the school of Bellini strong and firm as a column. The Child, whom the reverence of earlier painters oftenest represented as clad in a simple tunic, is wholly nude with these great Venetian painters. As a rule, He sits or stands in varied attitudes on His mother's lap; sometimes He plays with a fruit, a flower, or some other small object. Madonnas of this charming character, by Bellini himself, by Cima da Conegliano, and by other painters of the same type, abound in the galleries and churches of Venice. Everybody must recall the three exquisite examples in the sacristy of the Redentore, attributed by earlier writers to Bellini himself, but assigned by Mr. Crowe to Alvise Vivarini, Bissolo, and Pasqualino. Nor is it easy to

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forget the almost equally charming, though less religious, Cimas on the walls of the Academy and the Doge's Palace.

I have left to the last the consideration of the Madonnas of the Umbrian school, because this is the one which led up in the end to Raphael, and through Raphael to the type of the high Renaissance, the eclectics, and the decadence. With the Umbrian painters the model of the Madonna is usually a softly rounded and very girlish maiden. A certain mystic pensiveness informs her features. Yet her face has the exquisite tenderness of a baby's: neither idealism nor spirituality is expressed in her traits, so much as a perfect and all but infantile innocence. This type, conspicuous throughout the whole development of the Umbrian school, may already be observed in the germ in Gentile da Fabriano, and can best be traced onwards through Niccolo Alunno, Buonfigli, and Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, in the admirable collection of local art in the Pinacoteca at Perugia. Indeed, as one might expect from the exalted devotion and ecstatic, pietistic character of the Umbrian school (so deeply influenced by the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi), the Madonna and Child form its favourite subject; Niccolo in particular having repeated this theme a hundred times over. A softened beauty, combined with a far-away air of holy reverie, is the distinguishing note of these Umbrian Virgins. Their feet tread this earth, but their souls are absorbed in the contemplation of the infinite.

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In Perugino, the Umbrian type thus characterised finds, of course, its fullest and highest representative. Dainty small features, all too babyish for the figures that bear them; a mouth like a Cupid's bow; a tiny and delicate chin; eyes set well apart, with curiously heavy and drooping lids; faint pencilled eyebrows; a broad smooth forehead: these are the main elements in Perugino's Madonnas. The neck has also a peculiar but affected grace: the pose of the head on it is studied in its elegance. As for the divine Child, though grave and earnest, He is oftener remarkable for sweet and human babyhood than for supernatural character; yet His tone is pure and holy, with a holiness undreamt of by Michael Angelo and his followers. Perugino, indeed, carried to the utmost pitch the Umbrian ideal, which he repeated again and again, in all its pensive and affected beauty, with almost tedious frequency. His rival, Pinturicchio, has also a Madonna in a magnificent altar-piece in the Perugia gallery, which shows us in a far more virile and powerful form the Umbrian Madonna in her highest development.

Raphael's earliest realisations of Our Lady were necessarily to a great extent Peruginesque in conception, though with distinct reminiscences of Timoteo Viti's charming naturalness of manner. The highest point which he attains in this style is the lovely and sympathetic "Madonna del Gran-Duca," in the Pitti Palace at Florence. "The picture," says Kugler, "is the last and highest condition of which Perugino's type

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was capable." "The Virgin," says J. S. Harford, "has all the pensive sweetness and reflective sentiment of the Umbrian school, while the Child is loveliness itself. We think of Perugino still, but we think of him as suddenly endued with a purer, firmer outline, and more refined sentiment." To my mind, in spite of technical immaturities and Peruginesque drapery, this is the loveliest and truest of all Raphael's Madonnas. It still retains the purity and religious feeling of the Umbrian school, yet has something of the charm and artistic beauty of Raphael's Florentine manner. I cannot go on to compare the various other Madonnas of Raphael at full length; but it is impossible to contrast this Virgin with the *Madonna della Sedia*, which hangs close by it in an adjoining room, without perceiving at once the immense gulf between the simplicity and sincerity of the great painter's early styles, and the careless worldliness of his Roman period, when Our Lady appears as a beautiful and blooming Italian woman, without sanctity or ideality, pressing to her breast in mere maternal love a charming and engaging but quite undivine infant.

From Raphael's Roman period onward the decline in the conception of Madonnahood was rapid and fatal. No better example of the final stage in its evolution from the vaguely divine to the frankly human—I had almost said the frankly every-day—can be found anywhere than in the pretty little panel by Correggio, known as the *Vierge au Panier*, in the National Gallery (Room IV., No. 23). This pleasing but wholly unre-



MADONNA AND CHILD: *National Gallery, London*

CORREGGIO

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ligious picture represents a round-faced little Italian mother, striving to dress her laughing baby in a tiny short-sleeved jacket. It has, of course, the usual merits of Correggio from the point of view of technique: it is charmingly painted in excellent chiaroscuro, and attracts us by its agreeable domestic flavour. It is, in point of fact, a taking little *genre* picture of a young mother in the rapture of tending her own first baby. But it is no more a Madonna and Child than it is a Semele with the infant Bacchus. Its sole claim to be considered religious lies in its label. Not that this decline is peculiar to Correggio or to the Bolognese painters. The Venetian school had similarly gone off in religious feeling during the lifetime of Titian: that great painter's Madonnas are often mere grandiose portraits of Venetian beauties; while Veronese's and Tintoret's merge still more completely into pure sumptuousness of arrangement and voluptuousness of feature. The famous Madonna of the Pesaro family, in the Frari at Venice, though a magnificent specimen of Titian's composition, colouring, and chiaroscuro, is in all essentials a palatial picture of high life in a lordly and wealthy Venetian household; while the master has even represented the infant Christ as a frolicsome and mischievous baby, playing at bo-peep with St. Francis and St. Anthony.

There is one little variant on the three-quarter-length Madonnas with which I have here been chiefly engaged, so closely allied to them in the spirit and treatment that I cannot refrain from

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devoting a few words to it. This is the triple group of the Madonna and Child with the infant St. John, so common from the time of Perugino onward. Earlier Madonnas of our type consist of the Mother and Child alone: their background is oftenest simple, especially in the primitive period, or at best consists of a distant landscape, like Cima da Conegliano's, recalling the scenes of the painter's own neighbourhood. Such two-figure groups grow necessarily in time a trifle monotonous. As art becomes conscious, and strives deliberately after artistic effects, the monotony of the subject is felt at last to be tedious. Some variety from the accepted model is longed for. The sculptors of the fifteenth century, influenced by the desire for that pyramidal arrangement so effective in their art, first began to combine with the Madonna and Child the additional figure of the infant St. John Baptist. The painters in turn, as Springer justly remarks, were not slow to take advantage of so tempting an arrangement, which not only admits the delineation of additional features of child life, but also makes possible the construction of a more advanced composition. The two children, represented as playing at the feet of the Madonna, form a broad base for the picture; while the arrangement tapers upwards easily and naturally towards the head of the Virgin. Moreover, it was possible in such compositions to make the children engaged in playing with some childish object—a bird, a flower, a pomegranate (the last a symbol of the coming Passion)—and so to vary the monotony of the old

CIMA DA CONEGLIANO

MADONNA AND CHILD; *Pogg's Palace, Finch,*



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conventional group, where the Madonna and Child were represented, so to speak, merely in the abstract, as a holy mother and son, occupied in the contemplation of their own divine purity.

“The Virgin and Child with the Infant St. John,” attributed to Perugino, in the National Gallery (Room VI., No. 181), is a typical example of the treatment of this newer theme by one of the older school of painters. If a genuine work of Pietro (which is doubtful), it must belong to his early period. It is a three-quarter-length composition, representing the Madonna erect behind a parapet, on which the infant Saviour stands nude or practically so, while the baby St. John, with his conventional little reed cross poised lightly on his shoulder, occupies a lower plane to the right of the panel. Perugino (or his scholar) has thus to a certain extent thrown away the advantages which the new arrangement offered him; though he has also in part availed himself of the opportunity for a pyramidal treatment. Furthermore, the two children are not playing together: that would be too sudden a departure from the severely religious idea of Pietro’s pictures; for, whether or not the Umbrian master was an atheist, as Vasari asserts, he was at least as an artist of most unshaken orthodoxy. His little St. John holds clasped hands of adoration towards the infant Christ; and though the Saviour Himself plays, baby-wise, with a curl of His mother’s hair, that is the utmost relaxation of the religious ideal that Perugino can permit himself. The Virgin’s comely face, most Peruginesque in type, is grave and saintly with true

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Umbrian saintliness ; and the tiny St. John, though a buxom boy for so ascetic a future, yet expresses in his baby countenance the utmost reverence and religious feeling. Observe the parapet, and compare it with a similar feature in several other Umbrian or Lombard Madonnas in the same collection. Notice, too, the Perugian landscape in the background, with those impossible early Italian rocks, which even Leonardo was not ashamed to introduce upon the face of nature.

With Raphael, this triple type soon blossomed forth into a far more artistic family of pictures. During his Florentine period he produced three closely allied groups, in which the utmost potentialities of the pyramidal form are most beautifully realised. These are the *Madonna del Cardellino* in the Uffizi at Florence ; the *Madonna al Verde* at Vienna ; and the well-known *Belle Jardinière* in the Louvre. In the first, the natural touch of the children playing with the goldfinch charmed the Italian fancy of the time, and suggested the line of treatment which was to result at last in the purely secular Madonnas of Correggio and the eclectics. But the picture in the Louvre gives the best idea of this transitional stage, when Raphael had to a large extent got rid of his Perugesque preconceptions, but still retained something of the exalted purity and pietism of the Umbrian school. Its draperies and composition are far more perfect than those of the *Gran-Duca* ; but it does not speak to the heart like the earlier picture. On the other hand, it is not purely



MADONNA AND CHILD WITH INFANT ST. JOHN : *National Gallery, London.*
PERUGINO

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mundane and secular, like the Madonna della Sedia. There is still some touch of Madonnahood about the mother, some divinity in the Son, some Perugesque piety in the baby St. John Baptist.

In the Madonna della Sedia, on the other hand, which is a round picture of the Virgin and Child with St. John, in the Pitti Palace at Florence, Raphael returns, so far as the mere formal and formative elements of the composition are concerned, to the earlier Perugesque model. The figure of Our Lady is a three-quarter-length: on her bosom is the infant Christ, at her side St. John folds his little hands in prayer. But as regards its spirit, this Madonna, painted in the prime of Raphael's Roman period, is the most purely worldly, the most undisguisedly earthly, of all his Virgins. It is a mere beautiful Italian peasant woman, with a many-coloured kerchief wrapped carelessly round her head, caressing her baby. As Kugler rightly remarks, "the tranquil enjoyment of maternal love" forms the keynote of the motive. "It is the favourite picture of women," says Burckhardt. But there is nothing in it of religious art, save the "grave gaze of the Infant," which impressed George Eliot, and roused in Madame Swetchine the most ardent admiration. Present-day spectators hardly note even this single touch of spirituality.

The Garvagh or Aldobrandini Madonna in our national collection (Room VI., No. 1171) is a less pleasing treatment of the same general theme as the *Belle Jardinière*, belonging to Raphael's Roman period.

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It should be compared with the three examples of the *Belle Jardinière* type, and also with the Madonna della Sedia, which it resembles in tone though not in spirit.

As for the Blenheim Madonna in the National Gallery, and the highly ideal Madonna di Foligno in the Vatican, they fall rather under our next head of the Madonna and Saints, while the Sistine Madonna at Dresden must be regarded as an idealised form of the same subject in its special development as the Madonna in glory.

I am only too well aware how inadequately this slight and imperfect sketch deals with the subject of the most frequent representation in Christian painting. I can but plead in extenuation that the vast complexity and variety of the theme makes anything more than such cursory treatment well-nigh impossible. I shall be satisfied if I have suggested a classification of Madonnas which will aid the reader in constructing a mental scheme or formula of the types for his own future guidance. Briefly to recapitulate the main heads of such cross-divisions, I would say that any given Italian Madonna must first of all be regarded as an example of such and such an age, early, middle, or late, in such and such a school—Florentine, Sienese, Umbrian, Lombard, Paduan, Venetian, or eclectic. Next, it must be regarded as fresco or altar-piece; with or without donor or saints; as three-quarter-length or full figure; as simple or enthroned; as the Madonna on earth or the Madonna in glory. Careful comparison



MADONNA AND CHILD WITH INFANT ST. JOHN. (*La Belle Jardinière*).
Louvre, Paris. RAPHAEL

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through each of these groups, in time, in space, and in reference to the peculiar nature of the commission, will reveal innumerable correlative points of resemblance or of difference which I cannot here set forth in detail.

V

THE MADONNA AND SAINTS

THE subject with which we have next to deal has a somewhat different origin, and therefore requires somewhat different treatment from all those we have yet considered. More essentially and exclusively than in any of our previous cases, the theme of the Madonna and Saints is the theme of a votive or donative picture. In some few instances, it is true, a church or monastery might order an altar-piece on its own account, to be paid for out of the funds of the body-corporate ; and when this happened it would be likely to commission a painter for a Madonna and Child, accompanied by the patron saint or saints of the foundation. But, in the vast majority of cases, such ornaments of the shrine were presented by a family or a private benefactor. Many of them stood over the special altar of the family chapel ; others were given to local churches by the squires of the parish—if I may be permitted so very English an equivalent for the Italian *signori*. In any case, the altar-piece usually consisted of a central Madonna, flanked by a single saint on either side, or by a pair or more, according to the nature of the particular circumstances. But the

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number of personages on each side of Our Lady was almost always symmetrical, and in the earlier period, I think, quite invariably so. The Madonna is also in most cases represented as enthroned in a niche or under a baldacchino. In other words, being here essentially regarded as an object of adoration, she is shown, for the most part, as the Queen of Heaven in her state, while the surrounding saints may be regarded as courtiers—ecstatic spectators of her divine glory.

It will be seen already from these brief remarks that the subject of the Madonna and Saints is, for the most part, employed as a theme for altar-pieces. It grew up, in point of fact, mainly in connection with this special object. I do not mean to say that the Madonna is not also often represented with attendant saints under other circumstances. Frescoes of Our Lady with the Holy Infant, attended by the patron saints of the donor or his family, occur commonly enough in wayside shrines, in niches of walls, in the cloisters of monasteries, and on blank spaces in churches, quite apart from altars of any sort. But it was the treatment in altar-pieces which mainly influenced the evolution of the subject; and to that aspect of this very involved and complicated theme I will here, for the most part, confine my attention.

The patron saint of a church or a donor may of course belong to any age or country of Christendom. Hence there is naturally no attempt at historical or chronological propriety in these purely conventional

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and anachronistic compositions. A Roman soldier, like St. George of Cappadocia, may appear side by side with a mediæval monk, like St. Francis of Assisi; the apostle Paul may find himself balancing the nun of Siena, and the archangel Michael may stand face to face with St. Jerome in the desert or St. Dominic in the black-and-white robes of his order. No sense of incongruity ever disturbs the mind of the mediæval painter: he places the half-mythical St. Sebastian, shot through with arrows, in close juxtaposition with the historical St. Clara, who founded the female branch of the Franciscans; and he sees nothing odd in an animated scene where bluff St. Thomas Aquinas, with his works on philosophy in his sturdy hands, faces ardent St. Peter Martyr, with his bleeding head and a knife in his bosom. All these saints alike are objects of veneration to the pious churchman; and, the scene of the composition being really laid, not in any earthly spot, but in the Eternal Palace, such minor inconsistencies of time and place are naturally lost in the endless ocean of the Infinite and the Absolute.

Furthermore, what adds to the complexity of the subject is the fact that each such individual saint, represented alone, has had an evolution of his own along separate lines, which must be followed in detail by students of artistic development in Italy. For example, we can trace a regular succession of St. Sebastians, from the earliest Christian type in Rome, through crude and wooden originals, with Giottesque and quattrocento variations, down to Sodoma's ex-

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quisitely graceful and poetical conception in the Uffizi at Florence. Our own National Gallery alone possesses a whole series of successive Sebastians. We can trace St. Peter, again, from the simple, classical figures of the early Roman mosaics, through the long decline into mediæval lifelessness, and up once more through progressive developments to the majestic and august apostle of Raphael's fancy. As in our last chapter we followed out in part the evolution and differentiation of the Madonna and Child through the varying schools, so, in order thoroughly to understand our present subject, must we follow out the evolution and differentiation of each particular saint, in space and time, over the Italy of our period. It is clear that this task can only adequately be performed on Italian soil.¹ I shall limit myself here to suggesting a plan of campaign for those who would wish to attack the subject.

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that each element in the group of the Madonna and Saints has an evolution of its own apart from the whole, it is equally true that the group as a whole has an evolution of its own apart from that of its component members. In early altar-pieces we get the germ of the system. The Madonna is there most often represented on a central panel, set in a separate frame, and surmounted by a little Gothic arch; while on either side an attendant saint is accommodated with

¹ Yet even in London the evolution of St. Catherine and some other saints can be admirably worked out in the National Gallery.

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a separate niche, in shape like an Early English lancet window. Sometimes there are two saints on each side, all separately provided with their own little niches. In the first case, the altar-piece consists of three distinct panels; in the second, it is composed of five compartments. The Madonna and Child and each separate saint usually look straight out of the panel into the face of the spectator. There is no attempt at composition or grouping. The several components of the altar-piece might stand alone, if necessary; and, indeed, in modern galleries we often find such single saints from early altar-pieces displayed alone as complete pictures. The painter received a commission to paint a Madonna with such and such saints, and he painted each just as he would have done if he had received separate commissions for the single figures. Nay, more: each panel was painted apart; it is only the gilt frame, with its shrine-like arcades and its top-pieces or *cuspidi*, that gives them, when united, an artificial and wholly factitious unity. Several such altar-pieces may be examined in detail from this point of view in the Early Florentine room at the National Gallery.

None of these Giottesque or Orcagna-like pictures in our own collection happens to consist of a Madonna and Child with Saints on the wings, though there is an excellent altar-piece of the Baptism of Christ, with saints on either hand, of the school of Taddeo Gaddi (Vestibule, No. 579), which very well illustrates the general principle of such early compositions. In the

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centre is John the Baptist baptizing the Saviour, with two angels on the left, as is usual in the set treatment of this subject, down to the time of the famous Verrocchio in the *Belle Arti* at Florence; in a panel to the left stands St. Peter with his keys; in another panel to the right stands St. Paul, with the sword which forms his almost invariable symbol. The visitor should notice these two faces, which have almost the character of portraits, and which reappear again and again in endless pictures. Even so small a detail as the cut of the two beards—St. Peter's rounded, St. Paul's pointed—remains well-nigh constant through the art of ages. But in the Paduan and Octagon rooms of the National Gallery several examples of the Madonna and Child in altar-pieces, with saints in separate panels, may be observed and compared. For example, there is a Gregorio Schiavone (Octagon, No. 630), most instructive for our purpose; as well as an immense Carlo Crivelli (Room VIII., No. 788), with the Madonna and Child in the centre, and three rows of saints on either side, let in, tier above tier, as separate panels. The saint to the Madonna's right, by the way, is again St. Peter, with his massy keys, and with the same face and beard as in the Baptism of the school of Gaddi. The other saints of the lower row are the Baptist, St. Catherine of Alexandria, and St. Dominic. But close by it hangs another Crivelli (Room VIII., No. 724), where the saints have been thrown into the selfsame picture with the Madonna and Child: on Our Lady's right,

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the aged form of St. Jerome; on her left, a most dainty and jaunty St. Sebastian, not nude and shot through in a dozen places, as is his common wont, but clad from head to foot in a fashionable suit, and just poising in his hands a symbolical arrow as the emblem of his martyrdom. The visitor who looks at these two pictures with an evolutionary eye should also observe in the same room the Virgin and Child by Mantegna (Room VII., No. 274), about which I shall have more to say hereafter; another by Marco Marziale (Room VIII., No. 804); a third by Bartolommeo Vivarini (Octagon, No. 284); and a fourth by Crivelli himself (Room VIII., No. 807), with another St. Sebastian and a St. Francis with the stigmata. If, from these pictures, he goes straight into the Umbrian room, and observes Perugino's Madonna (Room VI., No. 288) flanked by the archangels Michael and Raphael, he will understand the nature of the evolution in the subject to which I am here directing attention.

This is the starting point. From the Byzantine or Giottesque groups of isolated saints in abstract and entirely symbolical attitudes, art gradually evolved by successive stages the various forms we have next to consider. The first step was taken when the component saints, instead of staring straight out of their respective panels at the worshipper, began to turn their glance more or less furtively towards the Madonna in the centre. In early examples, the one on the right looks a little towards the left, the



MADONNA AND CHILD WITH SAINTS : *National Gallery, London.* ANDREA MANTEGNA

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one on the left looks a little towards the right; their palms or other symbols are symmetrically disposed towards the central figure; some sense is displayed of the Madonna's presence; some first attempt in the direction of composition and grouping begins to show itself. In Mr. Herbert Spencer's phrase, a first step is taken in the direction of coherence and correlation.

A beautiful Fra Angelico in the Academy at Florence shows us a far higher development in the arrangement of the Madonna and Saints. Here, the whole composition is thrown into a single picture. As the old style of gilt backgrounds and little arched niches went out of fashion, it was natural enough to compress the composition into a single group, still more or less symmetrical and conventional in treatment. Not that the division into separate panels went out at once: in many later pictures we get examples of the composite altar-piece, built up out of many distinct panels. An excellent late specimen in the National Gallery is the great Romanino in the Venetian room (Room VII., No. 297) with the Nativity for its centre-piece and the patron saints of Brescia—for which town the picture was painted—let in as side-panels. But observe, both here and in the Perugino with SS. Michael and Raphael, that the tops of the arches are rounded, not pointed: the Gothic type has given way to the Renaissance. In the main stream of development, however, the Madonna and Saints of the later fourteenth century came to be

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represented, for the most part (especially at Florence), in a single group on one united picture. Take the Fra Angelico as a typical example of this transitional stage in the evolution of such pictures. In the centre we have the Madonna and Child enthroned—a very characteristic Madonna, in Angelico's delicate and saintly manner, holding on one arm a somewhat unnatural Child, still fully draped after the Giottesque model, and rather resembling an adult than an infant in the proportions of the figure. Our Lady sits enshrined in a capacious chair, with a canopy at her back of a sort which occurs in many other contemporary pictures. On either side stands a group of three saints, symmetrically disposed as in the earlier works, but with their faces turned in the direction of the Madonna. Notice, however, that the saints nearest to the throne look straight out of the picture—a trait which increases the feeling of symmetry. Notice also how this arrangement is further intensified by the position of the feet in these two subjects. Observe once more that the Madonna sits on a raised daïs; a marble step just beneath it is assigned to the four earlier saints, who stand in pairs on either side of her; the later monks, in robes of their respective orders, are content with the common floor of the apartment. Finally, note that in the central niche and the four lateral arches behind the principal figures we have, as it were, an evanescent reminiscence of the separate arcades of earlier altar-pieces. There is visible a fading relic of the idea that each saint

MADONNA WITH SAINTS: Academy, Florence.



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should be provided with a separate niche or shrine-like background.

Later painters threw the Madonna and Saints by gradual stages into a still more condensed and united composition. In the Umbrian school, it is true, and particularly with Perugino, the separate figures maintained to the last a strange degree of individual distinctness. Here the various saints usually stood out in almost complete isolation, and seemed scarcely to enter into any united action—a trait which survives even to Raphael's time in the Blenheim Madonna. This, the most famous picture in the National Gallery, painted by Raphael during his transitional period, represents Our Lady and the Child, with St. John the Baptist on the left in his coat of camel's hair, and St. Nicholas of Bari on the right, with the three balls at his feet which constitute his emblem. It should be compared with the Perugino in the same room and on a similar subject—the Virgin and Child, with the archangel Michael in a panel on one side, and the archangel Raphael in a second panel on the other—and still more with a second Perugino to the right of it. But in the remaining schools of Italy some attempt was made to blend the various figures into an artificial unity. Admirable examples of stages in this process may be seen in the great Ghirlandajo of the Uffizi, and in the Ghirlandajo and Botticelli of the Belle Arti at Florence. In all these pictures the Madonna is enthroned under a similar canopy; saints surround her seat on different steps, in accordance with their respective grades of dignity. For

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instance, in the Ghirlandajo of the Uffizi the upper tier is occupied by the archangels Michael and Gabriel, who stand erect, and the lower tier by two sainted kneeling bishops. Later still, the entire group is fused into an adoring body, engaged in what the painters of the High Renaissance characteristically describe as a *santa conversazione*.

As an example of intermediate Lombard treatment of the same subject, I would adduce the exquisite Ambrogio Borgognone of the National Gallery (Room IV., No. 298). We may take it for granted that this lovely work was a votive offering from a lady of the name of Catherine. She desired, therefore, that the Madonna should be represented with the two great St. Catherines on either hand—St. Catherine of Alexandria and St. Catherine of Siena. Their names are inscribed on the haloes which surround their heads. The Madonna—an exquisite example of the earlier and purer Lombard type—sits enthroned on a raised seat, which may be compared with that of the Blenheim Madonna and of many other Virgins in our national collection. The Child, erect on her knees, and short-coated after the earlier wont, is in the very act of placing the ring of His mystic wedding on the timorous hand of St. Catherine of Alexandria. The saint herself, as earlier and more famous of the two, stands at the right hand of Our Lady. In her left she grasps the palm of martyrdom; her right she holds forth, as the spouse of Christ, to receive the ring with which He spiritually weds her. As Princess of Egypt, the meek and



MADONNA WITH SAINTS : *Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

GHIRLANDAJO

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beautiful lady wears a regal crown. Her long wavy hair, of the type which we usually regard as Leonard-esque, is characteristic of this saint even in pictures of other schools : it should be compared with the tresses of another St. Catherine by a nameless Umbrian which hangs near the side door in the same gallery as the Blenheim Madonna. At her feet lies the wheel, with its conventional hooked spikes, which was the instrument of her torture. On the Madonna's left stands St. Catherine of Siena in her Dominican robes. Her face is pure saintliness—a marvel of beauty ; her left hand holds the ascetic white lily of the Dominican order ; her right the Madonna takes with a gentle and one might almost say a consolatory gesture. Our Lady seems to comfort her for her less favoured position ; and, if you look close, you will see that the infant Saviour holds in His left hand a second ring, which He extends with childish grace towards the Nun of Siena. In point of fact, though the Princess of Alexandria is the saint usually represented in Marriages of St. Catherine—as in the famous Correggio of the Louvre and the exquisite Luini of the Poldi-Pezzoli at Milan—the Sienese devotee not infrequently shares the same honours of espousal, as in the painstaking representation by Lorenzo di San Severino in the Umbrian room at the National Gallery (Room VI., No. 249).

I do not treat this Borgognone, however, in our formal classification, as a Marriage of St. Catherine, but as a Madonna and Saints—for reasons which I think will be clear to any one who compares the Cor-

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reggio and the Luini, just mentioned, with the Titian in the Pitti Palace and other examples elsewhere of the mystic betrothal. That subject has a history and a treatment of its own, while this agrees in all essentials with the common type of the "Madonna Enthroned with Saints," and wholly disagrees with the accepted composition of the "Marriage of St. Catherine." The reader who visits the picture I have described in the National Gallery should not fail to compare it with the other Borgognone which hangs by its side—a Madonna and Child flanked not by saints but by two separate panels of scenes from the Passion (Room IV., No. 1077).

It is most instructive to compare this exquisite work of Borgognone's with the wonderfully painted Andrea Mantegna in the Paduan room of the National Gallery (Room VIII., No. 274), not far from it. Here again the central space of the composition is occupied by the Madonna enthroned, though the raised seat of the Queen of Heaven has a certain Paduan simplicity and severity of outline most unlike the ornate architectural richness which the designer of the façade of the Certosa has given to the details of his palatial interior. This classical severity is very characteristic of the school of Squarcione. For Mantegna, the greatest fruit and foliage painter of his time, the background consists of a delicious orange grove, on which the master has expended all his skill and knowledge. On the Madonna's right stands St. John the Baptist, anatomically rendered as no painter of the time save Mantegna could have rendered him. His rough



MARRIAGE OF ST. CATHERINE : *National Gallery, London.*

AMBROGIO BORGOGNONE

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garment of camel's skin, his little reed cross, his *Ecce Agnus* scroll, form his conventional emblems : the earnest yearning of his ascetic face, the singular beauty of his ascetic body, are peculiar to Mantegna. On the opposite side stands St. Mary Magdalen, a voluptuous figure, fully robed, and in powerful contrast to the lean saint of the wilderness. The strength of the temptations of the flesh strikes her keynote. Her long hair, as usual, marks her personality ; so does the little alabaster box of ointment, very precious, which seems most appropriate in the hands of a saint of such expansive personal beauty. Her full neck, and the marvellously painted melting colours of her richly shot silk, betray the nature of the repentant sinner who has much indeed in her past life to atone for. The two figures are admirably contrasted. One is the saint for whom sins of the flesh have no attraction ; the other is the saint who has yielded to such sins and with hard struggles repented. But we must remember always that the painter's own fancy did not supply the ground-work for this striking contrast of type and character. His commission was simply for a Madonna and Child, with the Baptist and the Magdalen : he carried it out with all his accuracy of drawing, his refinement of colour, his conscientious study of the minutest detail. Probably the characterisation was more than half unconscious. The plants in the foreground exemplify Mantegna's habitual care as much as do the robe of the Madonna or the feet of the Baptist : they are recognisable at once by the eye of the botanist.

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It will be well at this point to observe that from the evolutionary standpoint these various groups are best considered in different series, according as they represent the Madonna flanked by two, by four, or by many saints. And it would be best for the observer to begin his survey in any great collection by confining himself at first to groups of the Madonna and Child with only two accessory personages. Thus it would be desirable in the National Gallery, after studying the Borgognone and the Mantegna which I have just described, to go on into the Umbrian room and examine, first, the Perugino with St. Jerome and St. Francis (Room VI., No. 1075), and then the Blenheim or Ansidei Madonna. In both these Umbrian pictures Our Lady is raised on a little pedestal above the adoring saints. But in the Perugino she stands, while in the Raphael she is seated in glory, with a type of background recalling in many ways the Borgognone. And here again we get another cross division ; for the backgrounds also fall into distinct types, of regular recurrence. For instance, there is the balustrade, with trees in the background ; there is the throne and arch ; there is the landscape with cities ; and there is the mountain and river. Examples of all these will be readily recalled by the reader as soon as the prevalence of the types is pointed out to him.

Again, it is interesting to note that such a type as the Madonna with St. Jerome and St. Francis of Perugino, where Our Lady stands upon a separate pedestal, produced a whole family of pictures of its



MADONNA DELL' ARPIE: *Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

ANDREA DEL SARTO

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own: an excellent late Florentine specimen of this theme is the beautiful and graceful Madonna dell' Arpie, by Andrea del Sarto, in the Uffizi at Florence. This famous composition shows the Madonna erect on a sort of hexagonal altar: in her arms is the Child, quite nude; at her feet, tiny angels cling in affectionate attitudes; on her right hand stands St. Francis, on her left St. John the Evangelist. In this picture we attain the full type of the Renaissance. Here, art is everything, religion nothing. The conventional symbolism of the saints has almost faded away. As light and shade, and as tender colour, the picture appeals to us as Andrea's loveliest work; as a devotional painting, it impresses us only by the gentle, aristocratic beauty of Our Lady, and the merry face and confiding attitude of the purely human and beautiful baby.

The later Renaissance carries us away into confused masses of saints in confused heaps of drapery. An excellent example of these more ornate groups is that of the Madonna Enthroned, by Fra Bartolommeo, in the Uffizi. This overpraised composition embraces a Madonna and Child with the infant St. John of the usual pattern; but behind is St. Anne, on either side a saint, beyond each of these again a row of three other saints in animated conversation; at the foot of the throne are steps, on the lowest of which sit two little chubby angels; by their side are two more saints in the very foreground. The top of the picture is occupied by three tiny cherubs holding an open book; to right and left other baby angels play musical

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instruments. Nothing can be more alien than these muddled and theatrical compositions to the simple and almost architectural symmetry of the earlier Madonnas. Artistic effectiveness has been largely lost in mere fussy accumulation of superfluous sainthood. We are well on the way to Correggio and the final degradation into fly-away angels and simpering saints of the Bernini period. Even the Sistine Madonna itself, when we compare it frankly with Raphael's earlier and purer efforts, shows in a certain degree the same unhappy tendency towards an ornate and somewhat overloaded composition.

It is most interesting from our present standpoint to examine in detail the group of Madonnas in the National Gallery, of which the great Raphael forms the centre-piece. They include a specimen by Giovanni Santi (Room VI., No. 751), the father of Raphael; another, already reproduced here (in a previous chapter), of the Madonna and Child, with St. John, attributed to Perugino; the Garvagh Madonna by Raphael (Room VI., No. 744), which is a treatment of the same subject of his Roman period; a copy of the Bridgewater Madonna (Room VI., No. 929) of his Florentine time; Perugino's Virgin and Child with Michael and Raphael, which is an altar-piece of three separate compartments (part still at the Certosa di Pavia, the remainder elsewhere); and the other Perugino of the Virgin and Child, with St. Jerome and St. Francis, in which all the figures, though isolated and unconnected in almost architectural distinctness, are nevertheless thrown, so



MADONNA ENTHRONED: *Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

FRA BARTOLOMMEO

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far as mere formal unity goes, into a single picture. Last of all, there is the great Raphael itself (Room VI., No. 213). In this casual group of various works by different Umbrian painters we have specimens of almost all the types of treatment here enumerated. They should be compared with the Madonnas in the Venetian room, and still more with the adjoining Lombard examples. A minor point of no little interest is the presence in many of them of a parapet or balustrade, on which the infant Christ stands or reclines in front of His mother. It is also worth while to observe whether the Child is draped in a little coat, as early reverence demanded, or is wholly or partially nude, after the later fashion.

A Venetian picture of the Madonna with St. Paul and St. George, in the Academy at Venice, signed by, and attributed, I think without any hesitation, to Giovanni Bellini, represents a somewhat different type from any of those we have hitherto considered. It is the analogue of the three-quarter-length Madonnas, which I treated more fully in my previous chapter on that simpler subject. In this beautiful picture, a most charming example of Bellini's manner, the Madonna is represented as standing behind a parapet, only the upper part of her body being visible; the Child, who is nude, stands erect on the balustrade, and looks straight out of the picture into the eyes of the spectator. Our Lady's neck is of the usual bold Venetian type, strong and firm as a pillar; her face has all the wonted Venetian calmness and matronly dignity. On

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her right hand stands St. Paul, with his long pointed beard, grasping the sword which is his acknowledged emblem. His face has to some extent the character of a portrait. On her left stands St. George, in helmet and breastplate and sleeves of mail; his sturdy hand grasps the long staff or pole from which hangs his pennon. A very realistic and human St. George he is, too, with features so bluff and so little idealised as to suggest the notion that he is but the counterfeit presentment of some Venetian general who has chosen to be painted in the character of his patron. The Maltese cross on his helmet and on the flagstaff in his hand forms a familiar symbol of the sainted warrior. Indeed, St. George, as ancient Protector of the Republic, meets one at every turn in Venice and in the Venetian territory.

The glorious altar-piece by Giorgione preserved at his native town of Castelfranco Veneto shows a militant saint in similar panoply, and holding a long staff surmounted by a cross-figured banner. This magnificent picture is also interesting to us as carrying to an extreme a frequent peculiarity of enthroned Madonnas in Venetian art. Often enough even elsewhere, as in the Ansiedei picture, Our Lady is seated on a high throne, raised by steps, or by a daïs or pedestal, above the lesser saints who stand reverently beside her. But in Giorgione's masterpiece the Madonna is elevated by two huge pyramidal blocks high over her votaries' heads, where she sits enthroned looking down upon the figures of St. George and St. Francis, who scarcely

GIOVANNI BELLINI



MADONNA WITH SAINTS; *Academy, Venice*.

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reach beyond the middle of the second step in her pedestal. This exaltation of the Madonna above the attendant saints marks, I need hardly say, an advanced stage in the conception of her dignity as Queen of Heaven. The military figure in the Castelfranco picture is often described as San Liberale, no doubt on sufficient grounds; but all his emblems—armour, flagstaff, and red-cross banner—are characteristic of St. George, the champion of Christendom. A study for this work, somewhat differing in the details (or, according to Richter, a later copy), hangs in the Venetian room of our National Gallery, where it is labelled “A Knight in Armour.” It should be compared with the neighbouring St. George in a quaint broad hat by Vittore Pisano, and with the other St. George by Tintoret on the wall beyond it.

Venetian examples of the Madonna Enthroned, with attendant saints, abound in the Academy and the churches of Venice. They should be studied in chronological order, from the Stefano and the Vivarini in the Antichi Dipinti room down to the Titians and Tintorets whose saints and bishops have merged into stately Venetian gentlemen. I would specially call attention, among the works in the Academy, to the Giovanni d'Allemagna and Antonio da Murano representing the Madonna Enthroned with the Doctors of the Church, which derives special interest from the fact that it still occupies the spot in the old Scuola della Carità for which it was painted. Other examples worthy of comparison from our present standpoint are

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the Cima da Conegliano of the Virgin and Child with St. John and St. Paul, representing in the distance the castle of Conegliano; and a Giovanni Bellini of the Madonna with six saints (Francis, Job, John the Baptist, Sebastian, Dominic, and Louis) from a chapel at San Giobbe. But indeed the Academy is a perfect mine and inexhaustible storehouse of Venetian examples for comparison in our subject. Outside Venice, one of the most curious Venetian specimens is the Cima da Conegliano in the Pinacoteca at Parma, where the Madonna is singularly enthroned on the steps of a broken triumphal arch, and the Divine Child is seated on a projecting portion of its plinth, protected by a corner of Our Lady's mantle. To the right stands the archangel Michael, with sword and armour; to the left St. Andrew, with the cross of his martyrdom. Shattered fragments of the arch litter the earth in the foreground. As the architecture is classical, I take the meaning of this symbolical treatment of the throne to be that Christ and the Madonna sit as King and Queen among the ruined relics of antique paganism. We shall come again upon this pretty allegorical conception when we proceed to consider the Adoration of the Magi.

For the most part, I have taken it for granted so far that the individual saints introduced into these compositions are the patrons of the donor or the particular holy personages to whom the church or chapel which they adorned was dedicated. This is generally so; but in order to understand the actual collocation of saints



MADONNA WITH SAINTS: *Pinacoteca, Parma.*

CIMA DA CONEGLIANO

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in any given picture we must know exactly the history of its origin. For example, in the great altar-piece by Romanino in the National Gallery (Room VII., No. 297), painted for the Church of St. Alexander at Brescia, the composition consists of the following figures: in the centre is the particular representation of the Madonna and Child known as the Nativity; on Our Lady's right, St. Alexander himself, in his armour as a Roman soldier, occupying, as patron saint of the church, the place of honour beside the Madonna; on her left, St. Jerome, Romanino's own patron saint—for his real name was Girolamo Romani. Above St. Alexander is San Filippo Benizio, as representative of the order of Servites; and above St. Jerome is San Gaudioso, the canonised Bishop of Brescia, as the chief local object of veneration. Thus the group of saints represents the church, the painter, the monastic order, and the town where it was painted. The reader will find it an interesting mental exercise to spell out for himself the various saints in the great Orcagna in the National Gallery (Vestibule, No. 569), or again the three superposed rows in the Carlo Crivelli altar-piece, and to discover in each case the reason for their presence. But in other instances the picture has rather a doctrinal than a local or personal signification. For example, we sometimes find groups of the Madonna and Child with the four Latin Fathers—St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory—as in the majestic example at the Academy in Venice already alluded to. Here the idea is rather that of Christian

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truth attested by the doctors, philosophers, and thinkers. Other similar compositions are the Madonna and Child with the four Evangelists; with St. Peter and St. Paul; with the four Archangels; or with the Saints in Glory.

VI

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

THE mystic story of the Three Kings in its simplest form is narrated for us in the Gospel according to St. Matthew. We are there told merely in the vaguest terms that “there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.” And after Herod the king had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, and learnt of them that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem of Judea, he sent them thither, “and said, Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child, with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”

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Such is the simple tale of the Adoration of the Magi, as narrated for us in the Gospel of the Hebrews. Later legend, however, considerably enlarged and embellished the episode ; for it is of the nature of legend that the further it gets from the facts embodied in it, the more it always knows about the minutest details. The Wise Men, it seems, were three in number : they were also kings—a fact not mentioned by our original authority, but inferred from the psalmist's prediction, “The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents ; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.” Their realms, said later writers, were Tarsus, Saba, and Nubia ; whence the third and youngest of the three is commonly represented, in late art at least, as a Moor or Nubian. Their names, which occur at any rate as early as the ninth century, were declared to be Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. The origin and meaning of these Oriental-sounding words is quite unknown, though Gaspar or Kaspar has been traced back through Gathaspar and the Syriac Gudophor to a certain Indo-Parthian king, Gondophares, who is said to have been converted and baptized by the apostle Thomas. In any case, we are assured that they were finally instructed in the Christian faith, and afterwards martyred. Their relics were long treasured in Constantinople, where they had been taken by that mighty discoverer of sacred remains, the Empress Helena. Thence they were carried to Milan, and, in 1164, presented by Frederic Barbarossa to Archbishop Reinald von Dassel, who removed them to Cologne as a

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precious possession. In the Rhenish capital they were preserved for ages in a chapel of the great unfinished cathedral behind the high altar, where a relief in gilded bronze of the Adoration of the Magi still marks the spot they so long occupied, while the chapel itself is known to this day as that of the Three Kings. But the actual relics of the Wise Men of the East no longer rest in it; they are contained in a magnificent golden reliquary, a costly specimen of Romanesque workmanship, executed shortly after their translation to Cologne by Archbishop Reinald. This antique shrine was carried away for concealment from the French in 1794; and, being then seriously injured, was not replaced in the chapel of the Three Kings on its restoration to the cathedral in 1807, but has ever since been preserved under lock and key in the treasury for safer keeping. The faithful may see it by application to the sacristan.

Indeed, if I might venture to digress for a moment, I would remark that the Three Kings are almost more important and distinguished at Cologne than St. Ursula herself, with her 11,000 virgins. They occupied the place of honour in the vast cathedral, and formed for centuries the principal object of local veneration. Nay, more—they were commonly known in Germany as the Three Kings of Cologne; and their Feast of the Epiphany, or Dreikönigstag, was specially honoured throughout the whole Rhine country as a very high festival. Hence the popularity of the name of Kaspar in central Germany, and the compara-

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tive frequency of Melchior and Balthasar. Furthermore, as the Magi were pilgrims who came from afar, and must therefore have rested on the way at caravanserais, the sign of the Three Kings was a natural one for an inn or hostelry. Hence it comes about that hotels bearing this name are frequent along the Rhine—one very ancient one so called at Bâle being familiar to this day to the modern tourist.

In Italy, however, where the relics of the Three Kings had rested for awhile at Milan on their northward journey, the Wise Men of the East were scarcely less famous than in Teutonic Rhineland. Long before their legend attained its full development, indeed, the Adoration of the Magi had formed a subject for the very earliest stratum of Christian painting in the Roman catacombs. It is thus one of the most frequent themes from the dawn of Christianity. As art progressed, and the legend gathered volume, the subject became perhaps the most popular and the most often rendered of historical scenes from the Gospel story. It meets us again and again in every church and every gallery of Italy; and the numerous examples transported to the palaces and museums of the North, enable even those who have not crossed the Alps to form some fairly adequate idea of the variety and complexity with which it has been treated. Our own National Gallery is rich in specimens.

This variety and complexity has induced me to keep the theme of the Three Kings for separate consideration thus late in our series. Historically, indeed,

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it should even come before the Madonna and Saints; but its richness in detail makes it desirable to treat it after that more simple subject. No recognised scene in early Italian art introduces so bewildering a multiplicity of personages and circumstances as this. And yet, at the same time, in the midst of that multiplicity, the uniformity of type is still marvellously apparent. All the chief elements of the composition recur again and again, age after age, with stereotyped regularity. The chief actors in the drama, often central to the picture, though oftener occupying its extreme right-hand side, are the Madonna and Infant. These principal figures present, of course, in each generation and in each school, the general features which we have already recognised as typical of the Byzantine, the Giottesque, the Florentine, the Umbrian, the Lombard, the Venetian, or the Paduan model, as the case may be, in each individual instance. They are just the Madonna and Child, seated, of the particular age and place and artist. Often the action takes place in a stable: when this is so, the ox and the ass, invariable accompaniments of the Nativity, are shown behind the Madonna; and very frequently the Shepherds are depicted in the background, watching their flocks by night, while the announcing angels are heralding the new-born Saviour. Often, again, it is at the mouth of a cavern—a detail taken from the apocryphal gospels. In other instances the scene is laid amid the ruins of an antique temple—a poetical and symbolical way of representing the triumph

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of Christianity over Paganism. Whichever idea is adopted in the particular picture, however, the background almost invariably consists of a wide and diversified mountainous landscape, through which the retinue of the Magi may often be discerned winding its way in stately procession down zigzag roads that thread the distant hillside. Of course the star that stands above the place where the young Child is, forms for the most part a conspicuous figure in every "Adoration."

The main action of the drama, however, is carried on by the Three Kings in person. They are always, I think, represented as typifying the three stages of manhood, and often, too, as representing the three continents, Europe, Asia, and Africa. There is an Old King, a Middle-aged King, and a Young King; and the Young King at least is frequently depicted as a Moor or negro, or at any rate as swarthy. But this racial distinction is commoner in Germany and North Italian art than in Tuscan or Umbrian. Sometimes an attempt is made to give all three Magi some tinge of Orientalism in costume or features. A simple turban often suffices for this suggestive purpose. As a rule, the Old King has a long and flowing snow-white beard; the Middle-aged King is provided with a shorter and more rounded beard, brown or chestnut in hue; the Young King is invariably beardless. But very occasionally, in northern pictures, all three are smooth-faced. The moment chosen for representation is usually that at which the eldest of the three presents

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his offering. In most instances he kneels and hands his gift to the Child, the Madonna, St. Joseph, or some attendant personage. Frequently he has removed his crown, in token of subjection, and laid it on the ground near the feet of Our Lady. The two other kings more usually stand erect, though sometimes the third, and occasionally the second as well, kneels before the Saviour. Each holds in his hand a casket or chalice containing his offering. Gaspar gives gold, Melchior frankincense, Balthasar myrrh from his southern kingdom. The Child is often represented with two fingers held out, in the attitude of benediction; sometimes He stretches forward His tiny foot to be kissed, with a quaint suggestion of papal formality. I will only add to this general sketch of the main variations that from a very early date camels form in most instances an element of the procession. But they have apparently been evolved, by the earlier painter, as by the German professor, from the inner consciousness of the individual limner. They are much more like Western llamas or alpacas than Arabian dromedaries. Such are the main constants which go to compose the features of an “Adoration.”

In the very earliest representations of this scene—those of the Roman catacombs—the number of the Magi is not yet determined: the mystic number three has not invaded the field; they are few or many, according to the fancy of the particular artist. But long before the beginning of the tenth century the scene had crystallised itself into a trio of the three

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ages, and acquired in the main the determinate features already noted.

Giotto's fresco at Padua shows us an early, simple, and naïve expression of these general elements. Compared with the later and very complex "Adorations" of the Renaissance painters, it resembles what a biologist would call a "generalised" form of the genus it foreshadows. That is to say, it shows the central type with few special or decorative additions. Here, the drama is enacted almost in the open air, only a slight wooden shed or shelter, the stable of the Gospel, being erected on four posts above the heads of the Holy Family. One might call it a building reduced to its simplest symbolical elements, as in a child's drawing. Even at this early stage, however, the background is occupied by a frankly impossible mountain, with a hardness of outline almost unequalled even in the first age of Italian painting. Down its rugged sides, along a dizzy path, the Magi are supposed to have wound their way already : no trace of their gorgeous retinue as yet appears upon its sinuous shoulders. The Madonna and Holy Family occupy the right-hand side of the picture—a position which remains almost invariable, I think, in later works, except where they are represented as central to the composition. I can remember comparatively few examples where the Madonna's place lies far to the spectator's left in the picture : where such occur, I believe they must have been painted with special reference to the light from the east, in their original



ADORATION OF THE MAGI: *Madonna dell' Arena, Padua.*

GIOTTO

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situation, as I infer from one or two instances still *in situ* in Italian churches. The Virgin herself, in Giotto's treatment, is one of the most charming and subtly sweet of his presentations of Our Lady. Her face and neck are admirable; but the hand and arm which hold out the divine Child are still, it must be admitted, distinctly wooden. Notice the bands of embroidery on the Madonna's dress, so frequent with Giotto, and repeated, as is his wont, on the bosom of the angel. As for the divine Child, He is more tightly swaddled than even the master's usual bambino : Giotto seems here to be strongly aware that he is dealing with a new-born baby. Observe, too, that under this rough wooden shed the Madonna herself is nevertheless doubly raised on a royal daïs, once by a curious ledge of natural rock, and once by a sort of box or platform, which seems to form the floor of the building. Both these features occur again and again, with various modifications, in later treatments. Indeed, such minor details, to all of which it would be tedious to refer in every instance, persist from age to age in the most wonderful manner. The reader must note them for himself before the original pictures. But I need hardly call his attention here to the portentous star, a very bearded comet, trailing its vagrant tresses across the startled sky, and indicating the whereabouts of the divine Infant.

On the Madonna's right hand (or the spectator's left) St. Joseph bows his head in a respectful attitude. On her left stands an angel in silent attendance. St. Joseph seems to occupy a lower stage by one step than

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the Madonna ; so also evidently does the angel in the foreground. All the figures, except that of a servant, are provided with most solid and Giottesque haloes. None is as yet more conspicuous than another. Later on, the Madonna's halo becomes much more magnificent.

The Eldest King is kneeling before Our Lady, on the lowest tier of rock, and is engaged in kissing the feet of the infant Saviour. He has removed his crown, which he has laid by his side on the step-like ledge ; his gift of gold he has already presented : the angel holds it in a sort of cup or monstrance. This is a frequent feature in later "Adorations" ; sometimes St. Joseph is admiring the offering or displaying it with pride to interested spectators ; sometimes he is represented, with great naïveté, inspecting it curiously, as if to satisfy himself of its genuineness and exact value. Indeed, to most mediæval painters the Adoration envisages itself essentially as an act of feudal homage. The Eldest King has here the long beard so typical of his character as usually represented.

Behind him stand erect the two other Magi. Their crowns are less honourable than that of the chief actor. The Middle-aged King, with shorter and younger beard, holds in his hands a highly decorated horn, containing frankincense. The Youngest King is smooth-faced and interesting : his features, I fancy, bear a certain remote resemblance to those of Dante. He holds in his hand a handsome pyx, containing the mystical myrrh of his country. No special Orientalism is expressed by Giotto in the features or costume of

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any of the Magi. To him the Gospel folk were still just ordinary Italian gentlemen.

In strong contrast with the solemn, stately, and saint-like faces of these chief performers, angelic or human, look at the face and figure of the brawny and extremely rustic attendant who holds the camels. As to those far-Eastern beasts themselves, which Giotto can never have seen in the flesh, they belong to the Noah's-ark order of zoologic art. Their legs, their heads, their manes, their bodies, are all frankly impossible. But, such as they are, Giotto did his best with them, as representing the fact that the Wise Men came from the East, the land of camels. So far as he can, he desires to be accurate. It is interesting to note, too, that this single figure of the servant with the two camels forms, as it were, the original rudiment out of which, in a later age, were developed the gorgeous pageantry of Benozzo Gozzoli and the panoplied glories of Ghirlandajo's "Adoration." We get here a first hint for subsequent evolution to expand and intensify.

As an entire composition, this fresco of Giotto's seems to me one of the most perfect among his works at the Arena. It is also full of instructiveness as illustrating for us the simplicity and straightforward directness of the early painter, compared with the overloaded and confused panels of his later successors. For the Adoration of the Magi became with the Tuscan artists of the early Renaissance a mere excuse on which they eagerly seized for processional display and the meaningless reduplication of Oriental magnificence. Giotto

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himself is held to have attempted the same subject again in the Lower Church at Assisi; but if that unsatisfactory fresco is really his own, as the best and latest authorities now hold, it shows rather a falling off than an increase in his powers of composition.

Readers in London will do well to compare our illustration of this Giotto at Padua with a tempera painting by Orcagna, representing the same scene, in the National Gallery (Room II., No. 574). It must be borne in mind, in examining the two, that Giotto's is a fresco, while Orcagna's is a panel forming part of an altar-piece. The centre of this important altar-piece was the great "Coronation of the Virgin," in the same room; while the "Nativity" and the "Resurrection," which hang close by, formed, with the "Adoration," separate portions of its outworks. The necessary constriction and dwarfing of the subject by the shape of the panel must therefore be allowed its due weight in instituting a comparison between the two compositions. Making such necessary allowances, however, it will be seen at once that we have here another relatively simple treatment of the theme of the Magi, which blossomed out in later times into such extravagant but picturesque detail. I would add that the evolution of this particular subject may be reckoned among those which can best be traced in our national collection. The visitor who has inspected this early example of the "Homage of the Three Kings" should proceed from it direct to the Fra Angelico, the two Filippino Lippis, the Peruzzi, the Dosso Dossi, the Paolo Veronese, the Vincenzo

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Foppa, and the unknown Venetian of the age of Bellini. Close observation of similarities and differences in these various examples will disclose an immense number of minute coincidences, and will also serve to show to some extent the order in which the various modifications were introduced, and the changes of tone which the subject experienced in the diverse environments of different parts of Italy. I would say to the student who follows out this hint, "Think of each first in relation to its time or historical order, and then in relation to the school that produced it and the artist who painted it."

The subsequent development of the Tuscan variety of Giottesque "Adorations" can best be traced, of course, in the churches and galleries of Florence, where abundant examples occur, culminating in that flower of Giottesque art, the exquisite specimen by Fra Angelico in the cells of San Marco. This admirable work shows us the Frate's handicraft in its latest, fullest, and richest embodiment. Burckhardt suggests, indeed, that it was painted in conscious rivalry with Masaccio. But a still more striking embodiment of early fifteenth-century ideas on the Adoration is the magnificent tabernacle by Angelico's friend, the Camaldolese monk, Don Lorenzo Monaco, as he is styled *par excellence*, in the room which bears his name at the Uffizi. Omitting the part of the work which is essentially frame, with decorative figures and an "Annunciation" above, this splendid altar-piece consists in its main portion of three arcades, beneath which are seen

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the Madonna and Child and the three Magi. Contrary to custom, Our Lady and the infant Saviour here occupy the left-hand side of the picture. They are enthroned on a raised seat, with a ledge of rock once more in the foreground ; the Madonna's head is veiled, as usual, by a half-open snood ; the Child is fully draped, after the early fashion. Behind these holy personages we see the manger, where an ox is eating ; a much milder and more ordinary star than Giotto's portentous comet stands in heaven above them. Quaint little angels float unsupported to the right of Our Lady ; St. Joseph, on the left, occupies, as is the rule, a somewhat lower position than the Madonna and Infant. All the holy figures have star-dappled haloes —a pretty variation on the earlier solid plaster models. The Eldest and Youngest Kings are both kneeling ; they have taken off their diadems and laid them on the ground by their sides ; the Middle-aged King alone is standing, and has handed his crown to an attendant behind him. The beards and gifts are of the ordinary patterns. But the greater part of the panel to the right is taken up by the retinue of the Three Kings, which with Don Lorenzo has reached quite appalling proportions. Most of the suite are Moors or Orientals. Some of them wear scimitars, and are turbaned ; others are habited in strange canonical caps and quaint varieties of peaked head-dress, intended by Lorenzo to be generally indicative of the outlandish and the heathenish. The figures have in most cases that disproportionate height in relation to the head

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ADORATION OF THE MAGI: Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

DON LORENZO MONACO

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which was supposed to imply dignity and importance. The rear is brought up by horses and nondescript animals, no doubt intended to be very Oriental, among which may still be detected a highly Giottesque and impossible camel. In the background rise the usual mountains, with incredible rocks ; while angels flit to and fro in the middle distance. This gorgeous composition may well be regarded, in conjunction with Fra Angelico's, as the last work of the Florentine Giottesque type in the "Adoration of the Magi."

Though not strictly to be considered as an "Adoration" at all, Benozzo Gozzoli's most exquisite "Procession of the Three Kings," in the dainty little chapel of the Riccardi Palace, beguiles me, will I, nill I, into a word of mention in passing. It covers three walls of the tiny building ; on the fourth stood an altar-piece, now wickedly removed to make room for a bald and ugly window. This central work must certainly have represented the Virgin and Child, to whom the unspeakably beautiful angels on either side are hymning, open-mouthed, their glorious adoration. All round the room the stately retinue of the Three Kings winds its way in regal pomp across the mountains to Bethlehem. This is the lordliest in colour and in detail of all representations of the Wise Men of the East : it befits the palace of Lorenzo the Magnificent. The scene takes place amid a delicious landscape of roses and pomegranates ; behind, the eye falls upon stone pines and cypresses, serene mountain-chains, and great castle-crowned hill-tops. The Eldest King is a portrait of the Patriarch

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of Constantinople; the Middle-aged King is John Palæologos, Emperor of the East; and the Youngest King is Lorenzo de Medici in his handsome boyhood. But these three noble figures do not monopolise the spectator's attention: they are accompanied on their march by knights and pages in sumptuous array, and by hunting leopards, which give a graceful touch of Oriental feeling to the pompous and fanciful mediæval pageant. No work in Florence breathes a more serene air of the pure and innocent early Tuscan imagination.

Returning from this digression to our more proper subject, I will mention next, as an example of primitive Umbrian treatment, the extraordinarily rich and overloaded picture by Gentile da Fabriano in the Academy at Florence. Everybody must remember its golden brocades, its gem-starred crowns, and its sumptuous ornament. As an "Adoration," indeed, this astounding work follows close on the same lines as Don Lorenzo Monaco's: its peculiarity is that it positively bristles with gilt stucco, with precious stones, and with jewelled embroidery. It is an orgy of apparel. The dresses in themselves afford us a perfect museum of decorative art: the turbans and caps glisten and glow with dazzling profusion of pearl, turquoise, and amethyst. The Umbrian masters sought to show their devotion by covering every inch of their costly panels with masses of pure gold, and rare stones by the hundred. In a work so complex, so minutely painted, and so fantastic as this—crowded with figures every one of which is bespangled and decorated in almost incredible detail—it would be



ADORATION OF THE MAGI: Gentile da Fabriano.

GENTILE DA FABRIANO

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impossible to reproduce in a single page of plain black-and-white the gorgeous effect of the entire composition : I content myself with illustrating the isolated figures of the Middle-aged and the Young Kings, thrown out against the cave of the ox and the ass behind them. Probably no picture in the world contains such extraordinary enrichment of ornament as this, or so lavish a wealth of decorative adjuncts. The jewels and other adornments are raised above the surface by embossed stucco. Traces of this early style may still be seen in Foppa's treatment of the same subject in the National Gallery (Room IV., No. 729). It is worth while to notice, too, that in Gentile's picture the Young King's head has already the affected pose afterwards so common in the works of Perugino.

As a specimen of the evolution undergone by the Magi at the hands of a Florentine artist of the Middle Renaissance, I would call attention to the beautiful round Ghirlandajo in the Uffizi at Florence, where a large number of the heads have all the character of personal portraits. In this noble circular picture, which is dated 1487 on a box in the foreground, the figures of the Madonna and Child, as is natural with that shape, occupy, not one side, but the centre of the composition. Our Lady is raised on a stone parapet, evidently detached from the ruined temple which here, as often, fills the greater portion of the background ; the ledges of rock, inherited from Giotto, are still visible behind her. The infant Christ, now nude (after the taste of the Renaissance), save for a little semi-transparent

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drapery, raises His two fingers in the attitude of benediction—a frequent element in such works, to which I ought, perhaps, in some earlier cases to have called more marked attention. Close by sits St. Joseph, with his head on his hand, in silent admiration: this attitude also is frequent and characteristic. Behind the saint, the ox and the ass are somewhat incongruously stabled under a wooden shed of the pure Giottesque type, which quaint little building is grotesquely erected between the classical pilasters and noble arcades of the ruined temple. I cannot venture to describe this very crowded and admirable composition in detail: it must include, all told, not far short of a hundred figures. Everything in it is dainty, consummate, exquisite. Ghirlandajo makes it an excuse for a charming representation of a delicious and graceful Florentine pageant. I will merely add that the Kings, in the foreground, have dismounted from their horses, and are kneeling in picturesque attitudes of well-bred adoration before the Madonna and Infant. The Elder King, long-bearded as is his wont, has laid down on the ground his rich velvet cap with the crown that surrounds it, and is just about to kiss the foot of the divine Infant, about whose attitude clings a certain quaint reminiscence of Papal ceremonial. The Second King, with rounded beard, but somewhat older than is habitual with him, has deposited his simpler and less regal crown on the sward in front of him. He is surely a portrait. The Third King, young and beautiful, with aristocratic and almost girlish beauty, looks like a counterfeit presentment of



ADORATION OF THE MAGI: *Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

GHIRLANDAJO

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one of the Medici. He is by no means a Moor—being, indeed, a fair and flaxen-haired youth of most Teutonic aspect ; but, as if to make up for this departure from custom, a negro servant, in a coat of many colours, is removing the crown from his long golden tresses. The right side of the picture is occupied by the adoring Shepherds, their sheep, to prevent mistake, being queerly introduced, like a trade-mark, beside them. These faces, again, are unmistakably portraits, and have no doubt been identified, though I do not know to what Florentines of that day critics may assign them. The charming youthful heads in a group at the rear have Medici features. The remainder of the picture is crowded with horses, horsemen, turbaned Orientals, Roman soldiers, spectators, attendants, sheep, shepherds, and angels. The composition is most masterly. Through the arches of the temple in the background we get glorious glimpses of distant mountains, below which nestle close a town and harbour. This is a picture that grows on one. The horses, in particular, seem to me far in advance of any previous attempts at animal painting in Italy. It is difficult to believe that so short an interval separates them from the painstaking but tentative work of Paolo Uccello. His efforts are praiseworthy ; but with Ghirlandajo performance is complete and immediate.

The marvellously minute and delicate “Adoration” by Andrea Mantegna at the Uffizi is in many respects very different indeed from Ghirlandajo’s treatment. It breathes no more the frank joy of the Florentine in

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grace and beauty. We must judge it as the austere work of a Paduan artist, dominated by the rigorous and formal scholasticism of that university city. It forms the central part in a magnificent altar-piece of three portions, the other two panels representing the Circumcision and the Ascension. But it is treated almost like a miniature as regards exquisiteness of execution and delicacy of workmanship. It is Flemish in its conscientiousness. Mantegna, indeed, was at heart half German; and I may note in passing that the Teutonic blood in Lombardy and the North made Lombard and Paduan art differ widely from Tuscan and Umbrian. Now, Mantegna passed part of his life in Padua, where Giotto's frescoes must always have been familiar to him; and, indeed, a continuous tradition from Giotto's time onward had kept up in Lombardy and Venetia many of Giotto's forms more unaltered than in revolutionary Florence. The points of material resemblance (of course as to subject alone) between Mantegna's work and Giotto's are thus much more striking than in most other instances. I hope, however, no critic will suppose I am comparing Mantegna's art with Giotto's: I merely mean that the conventional tradition as to certain details descends intact from Giotto's time as far down as Mantegna's. This is especially noticeable in the group of the Madonna and Child with the mountain behind them. That mountain still occupies the same place as with Giotto. There is here no ruined temple, but the action takes place at the mouth of a cave, which often



ADORATION OF THE MAGI: *Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

ANDREA MANTEGNA

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replaces it, in accordance with the Gospel of the Nativity. The ledges of rock, though painted of course with all Mantegna's skill, yet follow closely in outline the Giottesque model, even the tilt of the strata being the same in both instances. It is impossible to reproduce in one picture here a work crowded with so many distinct features; but visitors to the Uffizi who are interested in the subject should compare the Mantegna on the spot with a woodcut or photograph of the Giotto at Padua.

In every detail, this "Adoration" of Mantegna's is worthy of the closest and most attentive study. To the extreme right of the spectator stands St. Joseph, a bowed and bent figure, recalling to some extent Lorenzo Monaco's exaggerated height in the strange proportions of head and limbs, most unusual in so ardent an anatomist as Mantegna. I think this must be an echo of earlier preconceptions. He holds in his hand the staff which is his recognised symbol; his halo is far less elaborate than Our Lady's—a point which marks an increasing sense of his inferior dignity. The same shade of feeling is further expressed, as often, by placing St. Joseph on the solid ground beneath the ledges of rock which form a natural pedestal or throne for Our Lady. The Madonna herself is seated on a projection of native rock; she holds on her lap the gift of the Elder King, a costly box set with precious jewels. The Child, as is habitual in later pictures, is in the priestly attitude of benediction. The one attendant angel of Giotto's treatment has here been replaced by

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an irregular glory of little naked cherubs (in a vague *mandorla*) hovering around Our Lady's head near the mouth of the cavern. Above, four fully-draped angels of more adult aspect sing open-mouthed round the star, from which a ray of light descends perpendicularly towards the head of the Madonna. A little to her right, one row of wattled hurdles does duty for the stable, where the ox and the ass of the traditional treatment may be dimly descried in somewhat poetic vagueness.

As for the Three Kings themselves, Mantegna has treated them with Paduan precision, yet much in the spirit of earlier representations. It is instructive to compare the attitude of the Elder King, in this gem of later art, with Giotto's on the one hand and Ghirlandajo's on the other. But observe that Mantegna, in accordance with that spirit of greater historical and local correctness which marks the school of Squarcione, has given the Kings no European crowns: they wear huge swathed turbans instead, as do also their attendants. The Old King has removed his own headgear, which is being held for him by a negro in the rear, habited in an extremely Oriental costume. The Middle-aged King, a finely modelled figure, stands erect, as is more usual, clear-cut and definite: he has removed his turban; the orientalism of his dress is in many ways conspicuous; he holds in his hand his offering of frankincense. The Young King kneels reverently on the left; a Moor, of features rather Hamitic or North African than strictly negro, but with short curly hair

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and black skin like the darkest Algerian Kabyles. He too has doffed his turban and laid it on the ground by his side ; in his hand he holds his tribute of myrrh in a delicate *tazza*.

The rear of the picture, a carefully wrought background, is taken up by an admirable and well-painted group of Oriental attendants. On these subsidiary personages Mantegna has bestowed no small amount of pains and ethnological knowledge. They sum up his idea of the peoples of the Orient. One is a negro ; another a Tartar in an astrakhan cap. One is a Chinaman in tolerably accurate Chinese costume ; another a Kalmuck, with admirably painted features, a round fur cap, and a quiver evidently drawn from a native example. Behind lounge Turks and Arabs, Persians in high caps, and other Eastern figures. Every head is a study. Three camels occupy the attention of most of these underlings ; but the camels *are* camels. No longer the purely imaginative beasts of earlier art, they are painted throughout from life with the profoundest care and structural accuracy. Their expression of stubborn patience mixed with stupid complacency is admirably rendered. In the distance the remainder of the august procession winds its slow way in scientific perspective down a long, steep road, where other camels descend laden with bales of Eastern merchandise. Notice the painting of the rocks in the foreground, and the weeds which spring from them. These are in Mantegna's most exquisite manner. On the other hand, the mountains and crags of the background

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remain frankly impossible. Landscape as yet is not drawn direct from external nature.

The Uffizi and the other Florentine galleries contain numerous sister examples of "Adorations," which should be compared in detail with these supreme treatments. Very instructive, too, is the contrast of all the Italian forms with the Northern presentment of the episode of the Three Kings by Albert Dürer in the fine altar-piece, one of his earliest easel-works, which hangs in the Tribuna; though the gulf between the Italian and German schools is to some extent bridged over by this very Mantegna. I would also call special attention from the evolutionary standpoint to the "Adoration" by Filippino Lippi in the Uffizi, interesting both for comparison with the Ghirlandajo already described, and for its portrait of Pier Francesco de' Medici. Nor should the visitor omit to collate with these later works the little Fra Angelico also in the Uffizi, which well exemplifies the smaller miniature-like style of the ecstatic friar. And he must on no account overlook the other Ghirlandajo of a sister subject—the Adoration of the Shepherds, in the Belle Arti, with the Magi in procession approaching the manger. As to examples by later masters, in the Pitti and elsewhere, the reader needs only to be set upon the quest in order to find them for himself abundantly.

For the evolution of the theme in the late Venetian school, I will content myself here with a single work—the "Adoration of the Magi" by Bonifazio Veronese in the Academy at Venice.

ADORATION OF THE MAGI; Academy, Venice.



THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

Nowhere else do we get the worldly magnificence and the frank worship of wealth of the Venetian nature so clearly marked and so undisguisedly displayed as in the gorgeously coloured canvases of these later Venetian painters. Every biblical scene, every episode in the life of saint or martyr, becomes for them a mere pageant of rich families: they think of the Apostles as opulent contemporary Venetian aristocrats, and do honour to holy men or ascetic hermits by envisaging them as possessed of lordly mansions and splendid retinues. To be sure, the early Umbrian artists did somewhat the same; but they did it with a difference. They idealised as they glorified: the gorgeousness of their Kings was the gorgeousness that never was, out of poem or fairy tale. But the gorgeousness of the later Venetian artists knows no such touch of child-like fancy; they simply represent the disciples or the early Christian saints in the most matter-of-fact style as gentlemen of rank and princely fortune. They loved such scenes as the feast in the house of Levi the publican, which they treated as a banquet of the Loredano or Vendramin families. Thus there is a note of purely secular art about Bonifazio's "Adoration" wholly wanting to any of its idealised Tuscan or Lombard predecessors. The wealthy commercial environment of Venice has differentiated the type from its primitive devotional and mystical standard.

The scene is laid among rounded arcades which recall at a distance Don Lorenzo Monaco. But their

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style is of course that of the High Renaissance. In the background rises the usual ruined temple, so conspicuous in many of the Three Kings pictures in the National Gallery. Hard by stands the shed or stable, necessitated by custom; but we feel at once that it is only there as a vain pretence; Bonifazio put it in merely because the public and his patrons expected it. It was a part, but an uncomfortable part, of the subject. To the left poses a Venetian model with a staff, as St. Joseph. He is garbed in that vague and indeterminate stuff known to later painters and critics as "drapery"; it has no particular texture, and is simply used as a vehicle for splendid Venetian colour. And the glow of pigment in this fine work is undeniable. The Madonna exhibits a late development of the type which originated with the tender school of the Bellini; she still preserves in her traits some pleasing reminiscence of Cima da Conegliano. Her head is covered with the conventional snood; but, essentially, she is a handsome and well-built Venetian lady of Bonifazio's acquaintance. The Child in her arms is in like manner a very human baby: no more benedictions; he stretches out his hand in good-humoured delight to play with the cup which the Middle-aged King is in the act of offering him. In the Magi themselves, Bonifazio has departed still more markedly from earlier formalism, and allowed himself a more natural and less processional grouping. The Elder King kneels as usual and presents his gift; but it is *not* the one accepted by the Child: the infant Christ holds out His little hands for

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the cup of the Second King, who here stands forward almost on a level with his elder companion. Why this irregularity? I have a suspicion that the Melchior may be really a portrait of the donor of the picture; and, if so, by that one courtier-like touch Bonifazio intended to pay a delicate compliment to his wealthy patron. The Eldest King has laid his cap and crown on the ground; the Second King holds his own in his hands in a carelessly graceful attitude. As for the Third King, he is a Moor, and beardless as of wont—just such a Moor as Bonifazio must often have seen disembarking from his galley on the Riva dei Schiavoni. He wears his turban; an attendant, kneeling, hands him his gift in a golden casket. For the background, Bonifazio has gone off into unwonted excursions of playful fancy; for not only have we the train of attendants, the horses, the bales of goods, but our artist has even diversified and enlivened the scene with a well-rendered elephant. This beast belongs, I take it, rather to the African than to the Asiatic species. In the distance we have mountains, towns, trees, and castles; the ox or the ass I cannot anywhere discover: Bonifazio seems to have thought them unworthy of a place in so grave and dignified a composition. The piece, on the whole, breathes the very spirit of the voluptuous and wealthy Venetian society. And note, as characteristic of a certain sly Venetian humour, the knave in the strange cap looking round the column to catch a glimpse of the Madonna and Infant. Such touches, already present in Bellini and his school, are

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familiar in Titian, and obtrusively common in Paolo Veronese, Tintoret, and their compeers.

These few remarks form only an introduction to the study of a vast and interesting subject. I am well aware of their utter inadequacy. The reader can follow out my slight clues for himself in all the great galleries and churches of Europe. I will merely add one final suggestion. The Annunciation and the Madonna and Child are types of relatively simple and rigid species: the Adoration of the Magi, on the other hand, is perhaps the best type of a very varied and mutable composition.

VII

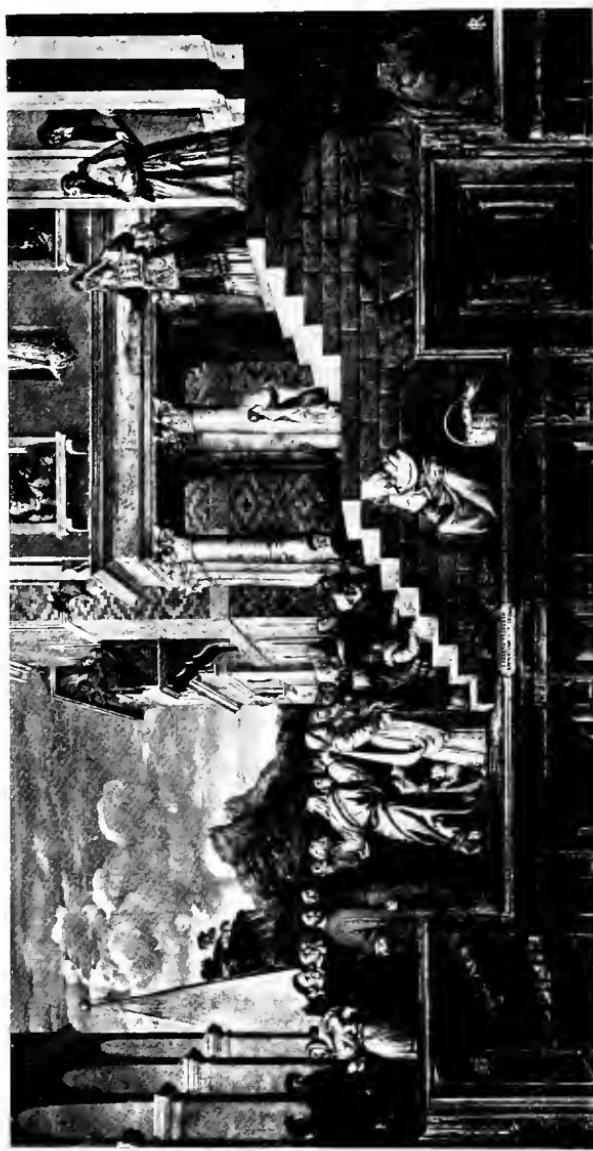
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IN biology it sometimes happens that we find an ancient form, and desire to trace its upward evolution towards more modern types with which our own age and our own world are familiar. That is the method I have hitherto followed in preceding chapters. More often, however, in concrete instances of biological research, it is the modern or well-known type that first engages our attention, and our problem is to trace it back to its earlier ancestry. In the case of the subject with which we have next to deal, I shall adopt the latter or reversed mode of procedure: I shall begin with a comparatively familiar theme, exemplified in its treatment by a great painter in a famous picture, and then shall trace it back through earlier representations till we arrive at the original form which is the parent of all of them. The one principle has been well described as the historical, the other as the genealogical or biological method.

Every visitor to Venice must vividly recollect the vast canvas by Titian on the walls of the Academy, delineating the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple. This brilliant and glowing work, the gem

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of the collection which it now adorns, was one of the master's earliest great pictures, and it was painted for the very building in which it still stands, the Scuola della Carità, fitted up at present as the Royal Picture Gallery. It is a most characteristic piece of Titianese painting. At the top of the great grey steps of the Temple stand the High Priest and his assistants, dignified and solemn figures, in their robes of office. Half-way up the flight, on a landing or platform, the dainty little Virgin, a frankly human child of most engaging aspect, pauses for a moment to take breath on her way, before completing the second part of the ascent in front of her. She is dressed, even at this early period of her life, in that invariable blue robe which is the symbol and outward token of her Madonnahood. A devout Italian of the fifteenth or sixteenth century would hardly have recognised Our Lady in green or purple. The red tunic and the blue mantle, long sanctified by tradition, are her invariable attributes. A mystic will tell you they symbolise heavenly love and heavenly truth; but for the evolutionist at least it is clear that the Madonna's cloak really represents the visible firmament, and that she wears it in her character as Queen of Heaven, in succession, no doubt, to some earlier Etruscan or Oriental goddess. Indeed, I notice that "celestial blue" is the expressive phrase quite naturally applied to the childish Virgin's dress in this very picture by Crowe and Cavalcaselle. The child holds her frock in her hand to prevent herself



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PRESERVATION OF THE VIRGIN IN THE TEMPLE: *Academy, Venice.*

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from tripping, with childish simplicity ; her face is sweetly trustful. The High Priest encourages her with his open arms to mount the great steps ; but his encouragement, one can see, is hardly needed. The little maiden moves on with serene confidence ; she feels no cloud of doubt, no childish shyness. She goes up to the High Priest to devote herself to God as a well-bred, aristocratic Venetian girl of three years old would go up to the Bishop who was an intimate of the household.

As for the surroundings, they, of course, are entirely Italian—of the age of Titian. The buildings are stately palaces of Renaissance architecture ; the picturesque background recalls Cadore, or the lower slopes of the Euganeans. One might almost fancy oneself in Verona or Brescia. To give a final touch of realism and modernity to the rich composition, Titian threw in the old woman with the basket of eggs at the bottom of the stairs, in the centre foreground—that “celebrated” old woman, with her plain and weather-beaten face, who roused such an outburst of wrath in Ruskin’s breast : “as dismally ugly and vulgar a filling of a spare corner as was ever daubed on a side scene in a hurry at Drury Lane.” She is an admirable foil to the high-born daintiness and delicacy of the Virgin. I need not further dwell upon the details of this famous picture ; it must be fresh in the mind of every visitor who ever spent three days in Venice.

But notice now a small point or two in the com-

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position of less obvious interest. At the foot of the stairs stand friends and relations of the baby Virgin; her mother, St. Anna, is conspicuous among them, with the children who were brought there (as we shall see hereafter) to accompany and encourage the infant novice. For the Blessed Virgin, said the legend in the apocryphal gospels, was dedicated to the service of God in the Temple from her childhood upward, like Samuel; and when her parents took her thither, fearing that she would not mount the steps alone, they brought her little companions, with lamps in their hands, to prevent her from being frightened. But Mary, filled with the Holy Ghost, went up by herself, undaunted, and smiled at the High Priest, who stood open-armed to receive her. And if you look at the picture carefully, you will see in the foreground, close beside St. Anna, the figure of a handsome Venetian lady (in point of fact, one of those beautiful models incorrectly described as "the daughters of Palma Vecchio," whom Titian so often painted), with outstretched arm, pointing to the little Virgin, as if to say, "See how brave and good she is! Why, she's going up by herself, without the slightest hesitation." So, too, the spectators in the upper windows look out with surprise, and point to the child in obvious admiration. Titian envisages it all like a domestic ceremony in high life of his own time—a sort of confirmation or reception of a noble novice, a daughter of one of the great stately oligarchical houses of Venice.

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And now I will ask you to accompany me for a moment from the doors of the Academy to the church of the Madonna dell' Orto, in the far north of the city. There, in a chapel of the left aisle, you will find a somewhat later, but hardly less famous, "Presentation of the Virgin" by Titian's recalcitrant pupil, Tintoretto (sometimes attributed to his son, Domenico Tintoretto). As in so many other instances, you will observe at once that the main personages and incidents of the scene still remain fairly constant. Revolutionist as Tintoretto was, his revolutionary impulse affects rather the treatment than the personages of the composition. You have still the stairs, and a very gorgeous set of Venetian stairs they are, too, carved with arabesques, which betoken the dawn of *baroque* architecture. At their summit, by the doors of the Temple, stands the High Priest in his robes and mitre, which closely resemble those of Titian's imagining. His very pose and the attitude of his hands are almost the same in both pictures. Half-way up the stairs we see the little Virgin, one foot as before on a lower step, the other just above it. Still she raises in one hand her childish dress in front of her: still the blond halo round her dainty head shines vague and hazy. Lower down are her companions, with their mothers, to encourage her: observe that the most prominent of the grown women points with one arm, as in Titian's picture, to the ascending Madonna. This feature, too, is traditional in the subject. By the side, in place of the old woman

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with her eggs, are lounging *lazzaroni*. Some of these look on with the same air of surprise and astonished interest as Titian's spectators. In fact, the longer you look at the two pictures the more will you be struck by their extraordinary coincidences. Even the pyramid or obelisk is alike in both: it obviously plays some principal part in this domestic drama.

Now, even without examining any earlier examples, we can judge at once for ourselves, from comparison of these two familiar works, what must be the primitive and indispensable elements in a "Presentation in the Temple." We can work back from them mentally to earlier instances. In the first place, we may discard all that is essentially and characteristically Venetian—the splendour, the gorgeousness, the rich robes and materials, the noble mien of the men, the voluptuous faces and figures of the women. We know that Tintoretto has eagerly seized the opportunity for foreshortening an arm, for displaying what he dared of a shoulder or a bosom. We know that Titian has painted in a portrait or two of the golden-haired ladies and grave, stately gentlemen, whom, in his courtly way, he delighted to honour. We may also eliminate the purely Venetian supernumerary personages, with their occasional touch of almost Flemish boldness or grotesqueness of conception—the old woman with the eggs, the half-naked beggars, the well-dressed crowd, the great dames who lean over from their decorative balconies. All these are the accessories which naturally spring up with less



PRESENTATION OF THE VIRGIN IN THE TEMPLE : *Madonna dell' Orto*, Venice. TINTORETTO

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reverent periods of art in great commercial cities : you find them at Venice in the full Renaissance, as you find them at Antwerp, Bruges, and Brussels in the later ages of Flemish art. They are wholly alien to the abstract ideal and devotional spirit of Siena and Perugia. So, too, we may get rid of the architecture of the time —the Corinthian columns, the rounded arcades, the stately porticoes, the parti-coloured marble, like that which encrusts the Doge's Palace. These are special Venetian touches of the sixteenth century : we must peel them all off, as it were, layer after layer, if we wish to arrive at the original elements which go to compose the groundwork of our subject.

The factors which we may feel sure belong of right to the scene, which we may expect to find fairly constant in earlier instances, are mainly as follows. In the first place, the action takes place on the steps and platform of the Temple at Jerusalem. The Madonna, a peculiarly mature-looking child for her age—according to the gospels she was only three years old—ascends by herself the great flight of stairs that leads to the upper landing. (This discrepancy of age, however, may be explained by a passage in the gospel of the pseudo-Matthew, where we are distinctly told, “when Mary was three years old, she walked with so firm a step, spoke so perfectly, and was so assiduous in the praises of God, that all were astonished at her and marvelled ; and she was not regarded as a little child, but as an adult of about thirty.”) She lifts her dress, which is invariably blue. Most commonly the staircase consists

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of two sets of steps, with a central landing ; and at this landing the Madonna is oftenest in the act of pausing. Above stands the High Priest, in full canonicals, with outstretched arms, to receive the novice ; attendants, most frequently two in number, stand by to assist him. Below we get St. Anna and St. Joachim, with the mothers and children. These form the indispensable elements of a “Presentation in the Temple” : spectators, citizens, buildings, landscape and background accessories are thrown in as may suit the taste and fancy of the age, school, or painter.

Now let us verify this *a priori* conclusion by looking back to Giotto’s “Presentation” in the *Madonna dell’ Arena* at Padua—one of that epoch-making series of the Life of the Virgin which has stood us so often in good stead through our whole inquiry. We shall notice first of all that the elements thus enumerated are every one of them there, though cramped and confined—or, if I may say so, foreshortened, metaphorically speaking, into a narrow space—and symbolically rendered, where Titian and Tintoretto render them naturalistically. The Temple is there ; but it is a temple “all-told”—an entire building, seen four-square, from roof to foundation, not cut off by the frame as in Titian and Tintoretto. The men of Giotto’s time always demanded this formal completeness, even at the risk of false perspective and absurd proportions : if you had given them part only of a building or a ship, they would have asked at once, “But where are the mast and sails ? where are the roof and the chimneys ?” Our own children do the same to



PRESENTATION OF THE VIRGIN IN THE TEMPLE : *Madonna dell'Arena, Padua.* GIOTTO

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this day : if they draw a house, they draw that house complete and entire, from the ground to the coping-stone, with a door in the centre, and a window on each side, and three more above, and on top of all a couple of chimneys, conscientiously smoking. Now the art of Giotto's day was still half childish ; so we get just such an abstract temple, with roof and portico a great deal too small for the people to pass under. The scale necessitated that. If you wanted a temple complete in one number, yet desired to make your figures large enough and relatively important enough to strike the eye, there was no help for it—you must dwarf your building and exaggerate your actors. Giotto faced this dilemma frankly : he accepted the situation. He was satisfied to make a merely symbolical or conventional temple, and to keep his figures almost life-size in the foreground.

In such a picture, therefore, we cannot expect the sense of space, the aerial perspective, which we find on great canvases like Titian's or Tintoretto's. We must be satisfied with a purely suggestive or ideal treatment ; we must accept Giotto's temple in the same spirit in which Elizabethan playgoers accepted the notification on the scene at the back, "This is a wood," or "This is a palace." It suffices for Giotto that by such rude means he has made you understand the purport of the picture.

At the top of the steps stands the High Priest—Giotto's usual High Priest, the selfsame personage who, later in the series, officiates, unchanged, in the

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“Marriage of the Virgin.” Yet observe that already the attitude of his hands is the attitude which we get in the Titian and the Tintoretto. That action became stereotyped at an early period: succeeding painters might improve on its drawing, its spirit, its anatomy; but they dared not depart altogether from the “motive,” the conventional treatment. Notice, too, that the steps are seen from one side, as in the Titian; the Temple occupies the right-hand half of the picture; St. Anna and her friends are to the left, at the bottom. Observe, also, that here you are left in no doubt at all as to which of the personages is the Virgin’s mother. In the Titian you may have felt some slight hesitation on that dubious point, but by the aid of the Giotto it is instantly resolved for you. St. Anna is the dignified lady with the falling head-dress, who stands erect in an attentive attitude nearest to the very base of the staircase. Her dress is the same in all essentials for Titian as for Giotto. Besides, the earlier painter conveniently provides her with one of his ordinary solid-rayed haloes, which stamps her saintship. You must be struck, at the same time, with the way in which Giotto compresses and shortens the action, by throwing St. Anna, the little Virgin, and the High Priest into close contact with one another. Nor need you doubt which of the men behind is really St. Joachim: his halo tells you that, even if his position had failed to do so. In the Titian, I take St. Joachim to be the elderly man who similarly stands just behind the Madonna, though I am by no means sure of it. Note, also, the attendant with

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the basket, by Joachim's side, in Giotto's picture (his feet, by the way, are about as ill painted as anything I can remember in the Tuscan master's handicraft). In the Tintoretto the Joachim has disappeared altogether, or is at least unrecognisable.

As to the other personages, they are there in most admired Giottesque disorder. The holy women who surround the High Priest are "the virgins of the Lord" so frequently referred to in the apocryphal gospels. The two men to the extreme right, recalling figures at Assisi, are evidently the same two persons who flank the Temple (as we shall see) in subsequent pictures. The porticoes, the columns, are all there in the germ; the balconies are there: even the second flight of steps, if I am not mistaken, is suggested in the quaint staircase to the upper floor of the Temple. I do not like to push a theory too far—but, do you see the basket carried by the man beside St. Joachim? No doubt it contains the turtledoves for offering, and the Virgin's apparel. But did it not also give Titian the hint for the "celebrated old woman with the basket of eggs," who occupies the foreground in his famous "Presentation"?

Now, before we go on to consider other versions of the subject, let us look for a moment in somewhat closer detail at the groundwork of legend on which all such pictures alike are ultimately founded. We shall thus be able to judge to some extent how much was necessary, and how much accidental or personal, in each painter's treatment of the particular episode. The

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basis of our story comes, for the most part, from two distinct documentary sources—the Gospel of the Birth of Mary, and the Protevangelion. The incidents in the two, however, do not wholly tally. In the Book of Mary we read that, “When three years” (from her birth) “had expired, and the time of her weaning was complete, Joachim and Anna brought the Virgin to the Temple of the Lord, with offerings,” in pursuance of their vow to dedicate her to the service of religion. “Now, there were round the Temple, according to the fifteen psalms of degrees, fifteen steps to ascend.” Curiously enough, however, Giotto has only ten, and Titian thirteen; while Tintoretto, from whom one would not have expected so great precision, has the proper number. “For, the Temple being built against a mountain,” the narrative goes on, “the altar of burnt-offering, which was without, could only be come near by stairs. So the parents of the blessed Virgin and infant Mary put her upon one of these steps. But while they were taking off their clothes in which they had travelled, and, as custom wills, were putting on some neater and cleaner ones, in the meantime the Virgin of the Lord in such a manner went up all the steps, one after another, without the help of any to lead or lift her, that one would hence have judged she was of perfect maturity. Thus did the Lord, in the infancy of His Virgin, work this extraordinary deed, and show by this miracle how great she was likely to become hereafter.” Thereupon Joachim and Anna left the Virgin with the other maidens in the apartments of the

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Temple till the time of the Sposalizio. In this version of the tale, it will be observed, St. Joachim and St. Anna are not present on the occasion of the Presentation.

The Protevangelion supplies us with an alternative form of the story, which has been far more instrumental in directing the conceptions of painters than the Book of Mary. According to that gospel, "When the child was three years old, Joachim said, Let us invite the daughters of the Hebrews who are undefiled, and let them take each a lamp, and let the lamps be lighted, that the child may not turn back again, and her mind be set against the Temple of the Lord." This episode of the lamps is rarely introduced into pictures of the subject. "And they did thus till they ascended into the Temple of the Lord. And the High Priest received her, and blessed her, and said : Mary, the Lord God hath magnified thy name to all generations, and to the very end of time by thee will the Lord shew His redemption to the children of Israel. And he placed her upon the third step of the altar. And the Lord gave grace unto her, and she danced with her feet, and all the house of Israel loved her."

From these two stories, as well as from hints in the pseudo-Matthew, the artistic legend was for the most part compounded. But other mediaeval legends must also have grown up as accretions round these earlier cores ; for in most "Presentations" of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, I find other elements present and almost constant, which must be due in great part to the influence of more recent stories.

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What those stories may be I will frankly confess I do not know ; nor are they, strictly speaking, material to our purpose. But it was the way of the Middle Ages to connect the early life of personages who figure in the gospel history with the incidents of the Prot-evangelion and of the Book of the Infancy. I do not doubt, therefore, that persons more versed than myself in the evolution of legend could supply a name, both here and elsewhere, to many accessory characters whom I am unable to identify. My object is mainly to trace the development of the subject as a theme in art, not to account for legend or to explain symbolism.

With this proviso, I shall go on to consider two very interesting and almost contemporary examples of the “Presentation” by Giottesque painters, both of which are to be found on the walls of chapels at Santa Croce at Florence. I would advise those who can to visit the originals on the spot and to compare them in detail : for those who cannot do so, I hope our reproductions will be found fairly sufficient. The earlier of the two, as I judge, is the one by Taddeo Gaddi : I say the earlier, not because I have any reason to know its exact date, but because it is earlier in type, which amply suffices for our present purpose. The slightly later one is now, I believe, attributed by those who have a right to an opinion to Giovanni da Milano. I give an illustration of each, and I hope the reader will compare them for himself before I proceed to dilate upon the details of their likenesses and differences.



PRESENTATION OF THE VIRGIN IN THE TEMPLE : *Santa Croce, Florence.* TADDEO GADDI

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Note first, to begin with, the form and arrangement of the Temple itself, already foreshadowed, though vaguely, in Giotto's Paduan treatment. But observe also that, while in Taddeo Gaddi the arches are round, in Giovanni da Milano they are pointed. Romanesque is in the act of giving place to Gothic. With this slight exception, the details of the architecture in the two pictures are strikingly similar. Observe, for example, the arch over the High Priest's head, displaying to the left little circular windows. Observe, again, the exact correspondence of the roof and its various parts: the flying buttresses, pierced with round arches; the pillars and their capitals; the architectural enrichment in the selfsame places. Next, observe the portico or loggia to the right of the picture, with the Virgins of the Lord seen issuing from it to welcome the Madonna. Note such close correspondence of detail as the fact that through the first arch of this portico we see three children's figures, with heads closely crowded together in the selfsame attitudes. The foremost of these children points in each case with her right hand; her left holds a book in Taddeo Gaddi's version; a guitar in that of Giovanni da Milano. In either composition the second girl lays her hand on her companion's shoulder. I will not multiply the coincidences of this curious group: the longer one looks at the figures which compose it, the more strongly is one impressed by their close resemblance. It will be sufficient to note here that Gaddi's personages are slightly less numerous—in other words,

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that Giovanni da Milano has added some elements to his predecessor's picture, a point which may be further observed in other portions of the composition, such as the bending figure on the extreme left, and the groups of children in the first-floor gallery.

As to the steps, they are here in both instances, in accordance with the gospel—fifteen in number. Comparison of their arrangement is extremely instructive. In each picture the first flight consists of five steps, the details of whose arrangement and ornament are closely coincident. Observe how in both cases the fifth step runs round the corner. The second flight also consists of five steps, which Taddeo (or rather his inefficient restorer) arranged in somewhat doubtful perspective, while Giovanni shows one how they ought to have been represented. Observe on this second flight the coincidence of the ornamentation at the angles and round the corner. The third flight, with its irregular corner ornament, should also be compared by the student of the original picture. The longer we look at the details of the architecture and the perspective of the curiously open Temple, the more are we impressed by the close nature of the resemblance. I may add that Taddeo Gaddi's steps of the second flight appear to me to have been painted over and muddled by a most incompetent hand. But here I am travelling somewhat outside my province.

It would be impossible to take the various figures of these two frescoes in detail at sufficient length for complete treatment. I will only note a few salient



PRESENTATION OF THE VIRGIN IN THE TEMPLE: *Santa Croce, Florence.*
GIOVANNI DA MILANO

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features. To the extreme right in both stand two tall grave men, who were already present in Giotto's picture: I do not doubt, therefore, that they are identifiable as characters in the received legend. But I cannot name them. As a matter of artistic evolution, however, it is interesting to note that their position is constant at the right-hand side of the composition, as is also the relation of their heads to the parapet behind them, alike in Giotto and in his two followers. One of them points with his hand in two cases out of the three. In every instance they appear to me to be sinister personages. Close in front of them are two kneeling women, whose veils and head-dresses proclaim them to be distinct conventional characters, whom, however, I cannot identify. They are not present in the Giotto at Padua, but they occupy precisely the same positions in the Taddeo and the Giovanni, as well as in many other Giottesque "Presentations." Minute comparison of point by point in this extreme right-hand corner of the two works will reveal various minor unexpected coincidences in the most minute particulars.

In Taddeo Gaddi's work, a child is in the very act of ascending the lowest step of the staircase. I do not know who this child may be, and, indeed, I have purposely taken no pains to identify her, because I think the pictorial evidence alone is almost more interesting than any legendary addition could easily make it. It is clear that this child has some close connection with the veiled figure among the kneeling women. This

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connection Taddeo failed to accentuate: Giovanni, therefore, has more clearly brought it out by representing the child in the very act of receiving a book from the hands of her mother. In this, as in other details, I am sure comparison of the two pictures will show that Giovanni when he painted his "Presentation" had Taddeo's picture in the neighbouring chapel of the same church continually in his mind, or, at least, was copying some other variant of the same model essentially similar, and that he deliberately endeavoured to improve on certain features which seemed to him unsatisfactory in his predecessor's treatment.

To the left of this single child are two other children—a boy and a girl—so closely united that they are evidently meant for brother and sister. These also are no doubt individualised by legends unknown to me. They do not occur in the Giotto at Padua, but they are frequent in "Presentations" of the later Giottesque period. The leaning figure who accompanies them in Taddeo's work is not represented in Giovanni's, but is foreshadowed, I believe, by the leaning attendant with the basket on his back in the Paduan fresco.

As for the little Madonna herself, she stands, in both works, on the top step of the first flight. In her attitude, Giovanni has gone back to Giotto's model. St. Joachim and St. Anna occupy, as usual, the extreme left of the picture: this position for the pair is constant. It is worth while to note, however, that Taddeo makes Joachim stand a little in advance of Anna, while Giovanni returns to the precedent set by Giotto. Observe

THE PRESENTATION

also the dress in each case, which is similar and typical: St. Joachim's robe cut low in the neck; St. Anna with a curious nun-like hood and wimple. These persist till the days of Leonardo and Raphael.

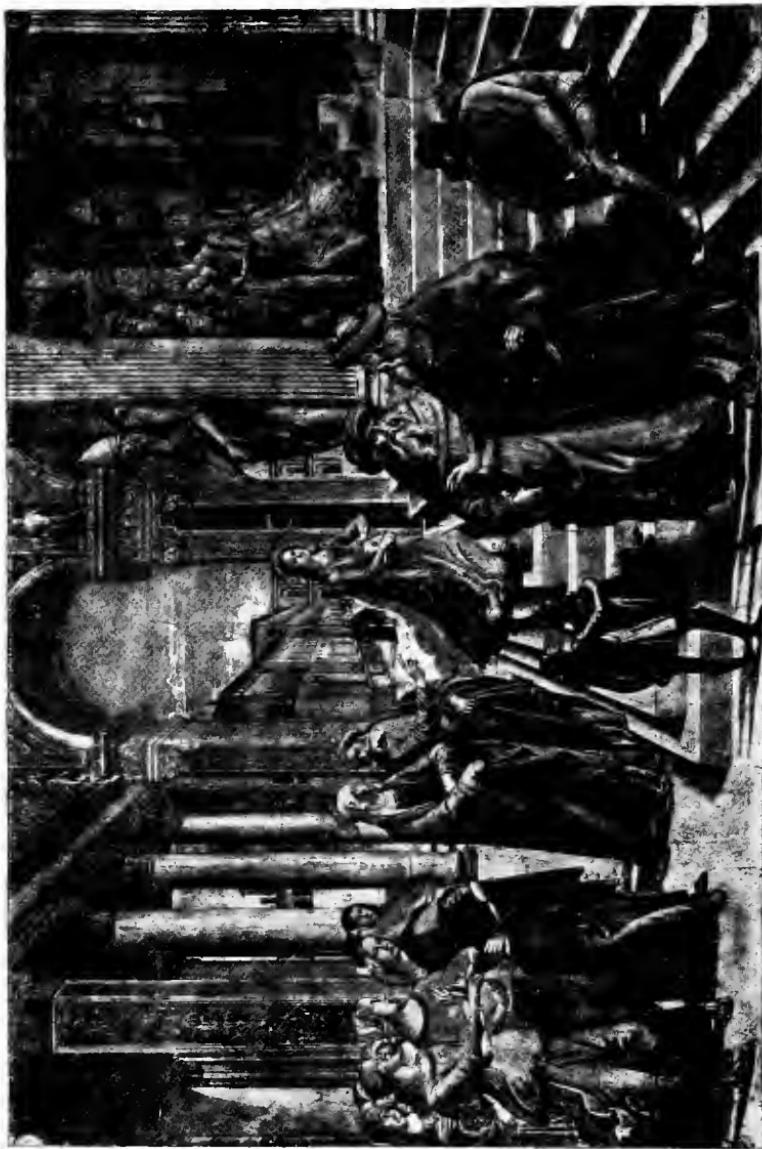
There still remains to describe the High Priest, with the group around him. These figures also are largely constant. Observe the High Priest's dress and hair and beard, as also the old man to the spectator's left of him. Only, as usual, Giovanni has somewhat increased the number of personages in his composition. Note, in particular, in Taddeo's picture, the dignified character who sits in a sort of private box, on the left, by himself (a portion of which box, I believe, has been damaged and badly repainted). This is the same character, I feel sure, as the personage to the extreme left of the High Priest's group in Giovanni's picture. I don't know who he is, but I am sure there must be a legend about him. Giovanni placed him in the High Priest's group, I imagine, because he was dissatisfied with Taddeo's perspective, yet hardly saw how he could much improve upon it. I am tolerably certain that the same character appears in the Giotto, intermediate between the heads of Joachim and Anna.

One word more as to sundry small differences. Giovanni's picture has the Temple completed in the upper right-hand corner by a tower or campanile, suggested, I take it, by Giotto's at Florence. No trace of this tower appears in Taddeo's picture, though I do not feel sure it may not once have existed and been painted over. But in all these matters I speak with

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that diffidence which becomes a person inexpert in the technique of connoisseurship. On the other hand the Taddeo has, to the left, above the Joachim and Anna, a second portico, out of which a lad is apparently peeping. It seems to me possible that a similar portico once existed in Giovanni's work, where the corresponding part of the fresco has evidently been damaged. But perhaps the analogous portion in his composition may be the gallery over the High Priest's head, where lads are similarly looking down upon the Virgin. In both compositions, a large number of the characters are pointing with their hands towards the figure of the little Madonna.

And now I think no one can look back at the Titian or the Tintoretto without being struck by the new light cast on their origin and meaning by these earlier pictures. The porticoes, the accessory personages, the mothers, the children, the steps, the architecture, all are foreshadowed in the Giottesque paintings, and all are accounted for by the apocryphal legends. As an intermediate Florentine stage, however, which largely explains the growth of the subject, I would direct the attention of students to Ghirlandajo's work in the choir of Santa Maria Novella at Florence. Here, of course, we have the usual luxuriance of Ghirlandajo's elaborate and florid architecture. We have also his accustomed introduction of contemporary portraits by way of spectators. The work, as a work of art, breathes the fullest spirit of the middle Renaissance. But still, the composition is for the most part vaguely reminiscent



THE PRESENTATION

of the Giottesque model, with which, of course, it is directly connected by many successive intermediate stages. I will call attention to a very few details. In the foreground on the right are the two bearded figures with which we are already familiar; but beside them sits a semi-nude beggar, who foreshadows the *lazzaroni* so conspicuous in Tintoretto's treatment. The steps, if carefully counted, are just fifteen; but the High Priest stands on a landing at the tenth, while the Virgin—as usual, a remarkably well-grown child for three years old—occupies the fifth, after Taddeo Gaddi's example. Observe, again, the persistence in the shape of the mitre. Behind the High Priest, the Virgins of the Lord, now reduced to three, come forth to welcome their new companion. They occupy even here the selfsame place in the composition as in earlier pictures. The children at the foot of the steps are similarly reduced to two; they are both boys, but embrace one another, as in Giovanni's picture. The positions of St. Joachim and St. Anna rather resemble Taddeo's type, though the hands recall Giovanni's arrangement. The figures to the extreme left are mere complimentary contemporary portraits. But notice how St. Anna may always be distinguished in fourteenth and fifteenth century work by her hood and wimple. Even her homely features for the most part persist, in Florentine representations at least, with considerable constancy. I cannot answer for Sienese or Venetian treatment.

Whoever conscientiously follows this subject in
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detail through an Italian tour will admit, I think, that it is impossible rightly to understand such later works as the Titian or the Tintoretto without at least some historical knowledge of previous attempts at similar compositions. The earlier pictures explain and supplement the later. I may add that the more of such pictures we compare, the more do we understand each detail in all of them. I am only able here to select for illustration a few typical examples out of many which at various times have come under my notice. The student who makes his own collection of illustrative photographs will constantly be able to fill in lacunæ in these remarks, and no doubt to convict me of occasional misapprehension.

VIII

THE PIETÀ

THE subject which I have reserved for this chapter differs in many respects from all its predecessors. It is on that account, indeed, that I have decided to include it, with some hesitation, among the themes here selected for separate treatment. In all our previous subjects the various pictures have been more or less noticeable for their uniformity and similarity; while the themes themselves have been marked by definiteness of aim and distinctness from one another. Works in each series were instantly recognisable as varieties of a species. But I choose the Pietà as a text because it introduces us to quite a new type of subject—the sort of subject where a moderate amount of variety prevails, where convention did not early harden down into fixity of composition or crystallise into rigid forms. A certain plasticity of imagination was permitted from the beginning; a certain indefiniteness of nomenclature and scope remained habitual to the end. It exemplifies, so to speak, the nebulous condition. I shall also show, as I go on, that this subject admirably illustrates sundry curious differentiating tendencies of the Tuscan

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as opposed to the Venetian or Lombard mind ; and that it is likewise well adapted for tracing some strange peculiarities in the development of art during the later Renaissance. On all these accounts it deserves recognition in this brief introduction to a vast and interesting field of evolutionary study.

In the first place, I will begin by pointing out that the boundaries of the genus Pietà (if I may be allowed that frank biological metaphor) are far less clearly defined than the boundaries which mark off a "Sposalizio," an "Annunciation," or an "Adoration of the Magi." In all these cases we know exactly what sort of picture to expect, what episodes are sure to be represented by the artist, what characters, what accessories, what backgrounds should be introduced. But the Pietà is a name very loosely applied to the touching group of the Mater Dolorosa weeping over the body of the dead Saviour. In its purest form it need embrace, I think, only these two personages, with or without attendant angels ; though it is often extended to include, besides, St. John and the Magdalen, with Joseph of Arimathea and other saints ; while the word is sometimes even used to designate a figure of the dead Christ, supported by two or more angelic guardians, without the introduction of the Madonna at all — though this last-mentioned usage I take to be a misnomer. Thus the student who wishes to observe and follow out this subject must carefully distinguish between the different but ill-marked types in which we find the Mater Dolorosa and the Cristo Morto alone, the

THE PIETÀ

Mater Dolorosa with the saints of the Crucifixion, and the Mater Dolorosa attended by pitying angels, as well as those in which we see the angels alone supporting the body of the dead Saviour.

From one point of view, again, the Pietà must be considered in relation to the Stations of the Cross, which are oftenest fourteen, but sometimes fifteen, and sometimes only eleven. In this connection it forms a single scene in a great sacred drama, whose parts, however, did not so completely settle down into invariable forms as did some other subjects of artistic treatment. The Stations of the Cross circle, of course, round the Crucifixion as centre; but many additional or generalised scenes, such as the Way to Calvary, the Return from Calvary, and so forth, are commonly recognised. In general art, apart from the series of Stations complete, the most frequent of these scenes or moments are the Ecce Homo, the Mater Dolorosa, the Descent from the Cross, the Pietà, the Entombment; while of subsequent episodes from the Gospel history the most frequent are the Maries at the Sepulchre, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Noli Me Tangere, the Doubts of Thomas, the Disciples at Emmaus, and the Day of Pentecost. I place these subjects quite intentionally in unchronological order, because I am dealing with them here simply as themes for pictures, and regarding them therefore rather in their artistic than in their historical or religious connection. I should also add that I am thinking of them only as isolated

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works, from the point of view of the visitor to churches and galleries, not as parts of a continuous series, from the point of view of a pilgrim at a calvary or sanctuary.

Again, the particular set of works to which I desire here to call attention are those which, like the Pietà, deal with the person of the dead Saviour. These are the Deposition or Descent from the Cross, the Entombment, and the simpler subject often described in Italian parlance as the Cristo Morto. They are motives which, in the earlier devotional paintings, were treated as sacred and affecting themes, intended to rouse the pity and reverence of the spectator, but which became, to the scientific artists of the Renaissance, mere bravado opportunities for the display of anatomical knowledge and often of obtrusively prominent and unpleasant realism. The later painters, indeed, were sometimes even betrayed by their scientific ardour into gratifying the most morbid and unwholesome tastes, where earlier artists had only sought to rouse the ardent devotion and religious feeling of their contemporaries.

Giotto's "Pietà" or "Entombment" (for it is called indiscriminately by either name), in the Madonna dell' Arena at Padua—the touching figures of which I reproduce here—forms an excellent example of the earlier and purely sacred treatment of such difficult themes. In it there is little or no insistence on the various painful phenomena of death, viewed as a physical fact; no deliberate and careful painting of an



PIETÀ : *Madonna dell' Arena, Padua.*

Giotto

THE PIETÀ

actual corpse ; no gloating over the ideas of rigidity and decomposition. The form of the dead Saviour does not even occupy quite the foreground of the fresco. Giotto, with perfect and beautiful instinctive tact, has thrown between the central portion of the body and the spectator's eye the bent figure of one of the Maries, who thus veils and conceals the dead limbs of the Redeemer. Another of the mourning women holds His shoulders on her lap, and clasps His neck with her arms ; a second supports His drooping head ; a third lifts His hands in her own, and so prevents the white and lifeless arms from falling limp and listless. There is exquisite though naïve art in every one of these actions. The grouping and composition of the four principal figures with the corpse they tend is in its way supreme and perfect. At the feet of the dead Christ sits the weeping Magdalen, conspicuous, as always, by means of the long and waving hair with which she had wiped the feet of the living Saviour. Behind them all the Mater Dolorosa stands with clasped hands in a singularly natural attitude of unspeakable grief (often imitated afterwards), her very draperies seeming to suggest profound emotion, while her face is most unutterably touching and pathetic. Balancing her on the right, we see the beautiful and eloquent figure of St. John, with his arms outspread in an agony of despair and shattered affection, as who should say, "Let me go —me too ; I must surely follow Him !" Just at first sight, to many people, this last pose seems over-

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done; it strikes them as theatrical. But the longer one looks at it, the more is one impressed by it; and on every successive visit to the spot the feeling of satisfaction and sympathy deepens. Farther to the right are Joseph of Arimathea and another saint (perhaps Nicodemus), in comparatively calm and self-contained contemplation.

As a whole, this is the finest flower of Giotto's pictorial achievement. He never before or after painted anything so consummate. We can well forgive him the ill-drawn feet of the saint to the extreme right, and the quaint expressions of the funny little mourning angels overhead, when we look at the stricken figures of the bereaved Madonna and the distracted Magdalen. And we have only to examine this glorious fresco with the most casual glance in order to see that Giotto was not thinking of how best to paint "the dead nude," but of how best to represent the pathos and tenderness of that supreme scene in religious history, as he himself envisaged it. It was the impression to be produced on the spectator that engaged his mind, not the pallor of the crucified corpse, or the listless rigidity of the outstretched arms supported by the Maries. In the scientific art of the late Renaissance we too often forget the profound feeling of the scene in our pervading consciousness of the fact that the body has been elaborately and conscientiously studied in the dissecting-room of a hospital. Giotto troubles us with none of all that: he is thinking far too much of the Madonna's grief to be



DESCENT FROM THE CROSS: *Academy, Florence.*

FRA ANGELICO

THE PIETÀ

occupied with the startling and painful realism of the anatomy class or the mortuary. His dead Christ, indeed, is hardly more than suggested.

Fra Angelico's exquisite and saintly "Descent from the Cross," in the Belle Arti at Florence, shows us in even a finer and purer form the results of this early devotional handling. Nothing that the ecstatic friar ever painted (outside fresco) breathes such an air of ineffable and unapproachable holiness as this beautiful work. In the centre St. John and the other saints are removing from the cross, with reverent hands, the lifeless body of the Saviour. The Magdalen, on her knees before it, is kissing the pierced feet with passionate grief as the disciples lower them. Near by stand the Madonna, St. Veronica, the Maries; to the right, a believer, with a face of deep pity, holds the crown of thorns, and displays pathetically the three big nails which had long been conventional. As a whole, this picture rouses in the spectator's mind the profoundest feelings of sympathy and devotion. No religious painting is more successful in exciting the ideas for which religious paintings primarily exist. One feels, as one looks at it, that it is good to be here. Fra Angelico's art, besides being beautiful in itself, has also what modern criticism would doubtless call the extrinsic merit of purifying the soul by pity and sympathy. But to Fra Angelico himself that aim was the first one. "Art for art's sake" would have been to his ear a ridiculous paradox.

The later Tuscan painters, however, developed along

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lines very different from those of their primitive predecessors. In order fully to understand this later development, we must take into consideration some peculiar characteristics of the Tuscan temperament.

From the very beginning the inhabitants of Tuscany—call them ancient Etruscans or modern Florentines—have always been remarkable for a certain strangely gloomy and morbid twist of sentiment and disposition. Their fancy runs always to pain and torture, to the ghastly, to the horrible. Whoever has visited the ancient Etruscan tombs at Corneto and Volterra, or the museums of ancient Etruscan monuments in Florence, Rome, and other Italian cities, must have been struck by the prevalence of demons and torments, of hissing snakes, hideous shapes, chimæras, and Typhons. Hells and devils run riot in them. This gloomy and morose Etruscan temperament gave colour in like manner to the early Christian art of Tuscany. The demons and gorgons of ancient Etruscan art pass into grotesquely hideous devils of Christian frescoes, like those which Spinello Aretino depicted on a church wall at Arezzo, with traits so awesome that (according to a false but illustrative tradition) they appeared to him in his dreams, and killed the very artist who invented them with remorseful terror. Dante's "Inferno" is the magnificent and sublime poetical outcome of this truly Tuscan love for the appalling and the painful. The "Hell" in Santa Maria Novella; the seething flames and grinning demons in the Campo Santo at Pisa; the open-jawed dragon or personal



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Hades of the “Last Judgment,” on the walls of a hundred Tuscan churches,—these are the pictorial embodiments of the selfsame spirit. The Etruscan artist dwells upon St. Sebastian, pierced through with arrows, as in Pollajuolo’s masterpiece in the National Gallery; he reminds one at every turn of Swinburne’s vigorous lines,—

“Oh lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and of rods!
Oh ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted gods!”

Of course I do not mean that Martyrdoms, Crucifixions, Infernos, Entombments are unknown elsewhere than in Tuscany: they are of the very essence of mediæval Christianity. One finds them everywhere. But what I do mean is, that they are more frequent, more realistic, more detailed, in Tuscany and in the Etruscan region than elsewhere. This is especially true of the most Tuscan Tuscany, that which centres round Florence. The prevailing keynote of the Umbrian and Sienese school, where Etruscanism was weaker, is rather ecstatic bliss, and rapt contemplation of heavenly joys, than ascetic severity or delight in torture. The majority of the pictures in the Pinacoteca at Perugia, for example, seem to move, for the most part, in a high plane of devotional joy and transport, especially observable in Buonfigli and Fiorenzo di Lorenzo. Often enough there is a heavenly and an earthly sphere in each picture—a Perugian trait which Raphael carried away with him to the production at Rome of the so-called “Disputa” in the Vatican, really

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an assemblage of the Church militant and triumphant, the Church on earth and the Church in glory. Etruscan as these Sienese and Umbrians were mainly by descent, they yet retained among their isolated mountain heights less taint of this primitive Etruscan delight in blood and wounds, in death and torture, than did the refined and cultivated dwellers in the Arno valley. But at Florence a certain echo of the gladiatorial pleasure in human suffering seems to have lingered on all through the Middle Ages. Whoever looks at the endless martyrdoms in the Uffizi and the Pitti must be struck with this fact. Indeed, the details of blood and torture in Florentine pictures produce such an unpleasant effect on many sensitive women that some of them find certain rooms in the galleries at Florence almost closed books for them.

Nor do I say that Venetian and Lombard painters do not equally represent subjects of death and martyrdom. Still, they do so for the most part with a certain subtle difference. Etrurian blood was common in the Po valley. But the Venetians at least see even their martyrdoms through a glorifying and softening haze of Venetian magnificence. The Christian sufferers almost seem as if they liked it. Take as a fine example Paolo Veronese's noble St. Sebastian, in the church of that name at Venice. Compare, again, the cheerful way in which Carpaccio despatches St. Ursula and her 11,000 Virgins, in the graceful picture in the Venice Academy, with such a work as Botticelli's "Calumny"; or, again, contrast the spirit of Paolo Veronese's "Martyrdom of

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St. Giustina," at the Uffizi, with the Florentine martyrdoms in the rooms around it. The Venetian is always intent on the picturesqueness and splendour and beauty of the scene; the Tuscan dwells rather on its pain and horror.

In the earlier period, once more, this tendency to dwell upon death and torment is largely restrained by the reverential and devotional feelings of the painters. As time went on, however, and art grew more self-conscious, the desire for anatomical accuracy and for realism in representation sent the great Tuscan and Paduan artists to study in the dissecting room, and gave them a further taste for these morbid aspects of nature. They began to paint the dead Christ from bodies in the mortuary; to study mangled saints from the accident wards and lazarus-houses. A most unpleasant example of the results of this tendency may be seen in the extremely painful "Cristo Morto," by Mantegna, in the Brera at Milan. This very unhappy Pietà is a triumph of what I will venture to describe as dead-house realism. It represents a corpse, boldly and admirably foreshortened, but in an advanced stage of *rigor mortis*, studied from nature with surprising accuracy, and appalling in its resemblance to its loathsome original. No emotion of reverence, of religious awe, or of human pity is excited by looking at it; the sole impression we receive is one of disgust and repulsion, mingled with an unwilling and grudging recognition of the painter's supreme mastery of light and shade, of anatomical and perspective science.

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The faces of the Maries are equally unpleasant, and for a similar reason; their eyes are swollen and red with crying; their expressions are those of too agonised grief; their whole effect is spoiled for us by an excessive realism. I know no picture that more completely exhibits the difference in this respect between the earlier devotional and the later scientific and artistic ideal. Even the noble "Crucifixion" by Mantegna, in the Louvre, where the foreground figures are magnificent in their stateliness, is not wholly free from a similar taint in the dead Saviour and the thieves who accompany Him.

Our own National Gallery contains not a few works which excellently illustrate this phase of artistic evolution. Its two chief Pietàs are by Michael Angelo (Room I., No. 790) and by Francia. Of these the Michael Angelo is highly representative of later Renaissance feeling. Though unfinished, and in many ways unattractive, it is considered by Richter a genuine work of the mighty master. But it is characteristic of Michael Angelo that what we notice in it most is not the features of the Maries, nor the sentiment of the work, but the rendering of the corpse in all its flaccid limbs and muscles. It is a study of a dead body. Hence it is not in the least attractive to the ordinary spectator. Our other Michael Angelo—the "Holy Family"—includes at least two figures of youthful angels which, authentic or not, are undeniably beautiful; but this Pietà contains, from the point of view of the great public, nothing save a ghastly



ENTOMBMENT: *National Gallery, London.*

MICHAEL ANGELO

THE PIETÀ

rendering of a sculpturesque corpse, thrown into an attitude whose chief merit lies in the difficulty of painting it. One can see that Michael Angelo had learnt his anatomy from the dead body direct, and took pride in showing how closely he had studied it. In short, this picture is in essence not a Pietà at all—not a devotional picture—but a design from the dead nude, and an exercise in foreshortening.

The other Pietà, by Francia (Room V., No. 180), admirably represents the spirit of the Ferrarese school at its best and highest. It is, indeed, one of the most satisfactory works, in its way, in our national collection—I mean, we have in it a splendid and consummate specimen of the master it illustrates. Originally this fine work formed the lunette on the top of the large adjoining altar-piece representing the Virgin and Child enthroned with St. Lawrence and St. Romualdo. The necessity of shape thus imposed upon Francia naturally conditions and circumscribes its forms; and I may here remark, in passing, that a comparison of the few lunette pictures in the National Gallery may supply the student of evolution with certain other interesting and luminous suggestions as to the art of composition, which I leave to be filled in by his own ingenuity. This particular work of the great Bolognese master is, in the strictest sense of the term, a Pietà—that is to say, it comprises only the figures of the Madonna and the dead Christ, with attendant angels. In spite of a certain incipient Bolognese sentimentalism, its tone is largely that of the earlier painters.

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“The artist has filled his picture,” says Mr. E. T. Cook, in his admirable handbook, “with that solemn reverential pity, harmonised by love, which befits his subject. The body of Christ—utterly dead, yet not distorted nor defaced by death—is that of a tired man whose great soul would not let Him rest while there was still His Father’s work to do on earth. In the face of the angel at His head there is a look of quiet joy . . . in the attitude and expression of the angel at the feet there is prayerful sympathy for the sorrowing mother. The face of the mother herself, which before” [in the altar-piece] “was pure and calm, is now tear-stained and sad, because her Son has met so cruel a death.

“‘What else in life seems piteous any more
After such pity?’

Yet it bears a look of content because the world has known Him. She rests His body tenderly on her knee as she did when He was a little child.” On the whole, in spite of some strained emotion, no more beautiful Pietà occurs in Italian art after the age of Fra Angelico.

Though it may seem a digression, I will venture to call attention at this point of our exposition to one or two other pictures in the National Gallery which illustrate various successive phases in the later love of torture and death, especially in Tuscany. I have already alluded to the great but distasteful Pollajuolo (Room I., No. 292) of the “Martyrdom of St. Sebastian,” which hangs in the same room with the Michael



PIETÀ: National Gallery, London.

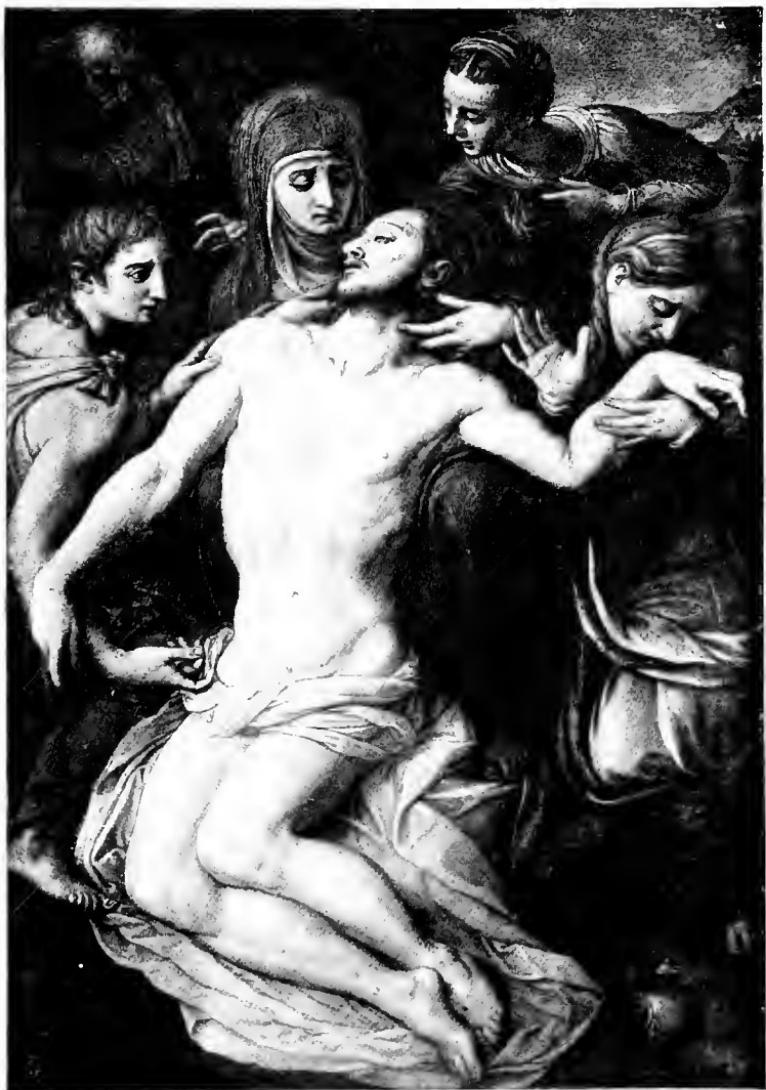
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Angelo, interesting because Pollajuolo was the first close student of that artistic anatomy afterwards so highly developed by Leonardo and Mantegna. He painted, above all, the writhing body. Not far from it may be seen Ridolfo Ghirlandajo's "Procession to Calvary" (Room I., No. 1143), where the grief of the Maries and the suffering of the Christ, who bears His cross, are depicted with vulgar force and curious animation in most unsympathetic and brilliant colouring. The work, if genuine, is wholly unworthy of the skilful hand that painted the noble and beautiful "San Zenobio" in the Uffizi at Florence. Compare with these two Tuscan pictures the agonised writhings in Castagno's "Crucifixion" (Room II., No. 1138), side by side with the earlier and purely Etruscan ghastliness of the "Christ on the Cross," in which Segna di Buonaventura displays the uglier phase of the primitive Sienese artists (Room II., No. 567). How different they both are again from the mere polite sentimentalism of Correggio's "Ecce Homo" (Room IV., No. 76), and the theatrical prettiness of his "Agony in the Garden." Go straight from these mannered and insipid works to the intense pietism of the "Crucifixion," by Niccolo Alunno (Room VI., No. 1107), where wild efforts are made after the expression of grief which remind us almost of early German painters; and observe how this intenser Umbrian spirit prevails even in later and weaker types like Lo Spagna's "Agony" (Room VI., No. 1032). By contrast with these, turn once more to the studied Venetian dainti-

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ness of Giovanni Bellini's "Death of St. Peter Martyr," which is as little of a martyrdom from the Tuscan standpoint as one can well imagine. True, a soldier in the foreground is placidly engaged in murdering without malice the unruffled saint; but, with true Venetian spirit, Bellini (or his follower) has troubled himself little about the blood or the wound; he is much more interested in the foliage of the wood and the delicious landscape, the feather in the inoffensive assassin's helmet, and the bystanders, who take no notice at all of this picturesque though somewhat startling episode. No dwelling on throes and torments here: 'tis a most peaceful murder. To a Tuscan, a martyrdom is an opportunity for pangs and agonies; to a Venetian, it is merely an accidental occasion for pretty background or for voluptuous display of copious female charms in a St. Catherine or a St. Agatha.

As an example of the last vapid stage in the decline of Tuscan art in the sixteenth century I would instance the uninteresting "Cristo Morto," by Bronzino, in the Uffizi at Florence. Bronzino is the painter of that astonishingly unpleasant and ugly Venus in the National Gallery (Room I., No. 651), known as "An Allegory," or "All is Vanity"—probably the vulgarest and emptiest piece of Italian work in our collection. He is also responsible for the false and flashy "Descent into Hell," in the Scuola Toscana room at the Uffizi—a picture more offensive in its hateful and prurient treatment of the nude than any other work one can easily recall. The nakedness of his nudes is their one



CHRISTO MORTO: *Uffizi Gallery, Florence.*

BRONZINO

THE PIETÀ

salient characteristic. In this "Cristo Morto," however, even Bronzino is at his worst; for he shows us how peculiarly discordant is this commonplace and catchpenny style of art when applied to a subject usually regarded as one of the deepest solemnity and the highest pathos. He has but to touch the Pietà, and straightway he degrades it—degrades it below the level of even the modern illustrated religious book, sinking to depths of vulgarity and false histrionic sentiment which the Florentine of his day alone would ever have tolerated. Whoever can admire such work as Bronzino's shows himself thereby psychologically incapable of ever entering into the inmost soul of Lippi and Botticelli, of Giotto and Fra Angelico.

If there is one figure worse than another in this egregious piece of bad academy art masquerading in the guise of a religious picture, it is the personage on the left—St. John, I suppose, though what Bronzino called him is quite unimportant—a sentimental, theatrical, unmeaning figure, about as conscious of the scene in which he bears a part as if he were rehearsing it for a melodramatic representation. And that is, in fact, pretty much what he is doing; for to Bronzino a subject like the Pietà envisaged itself essentially as a *tableau vivant*—a set composition of models, whom you chose, for the most part, for their arms and necks, and whom you arranged for effect in what you took to be a pretty and striking attitude. Almost equally offensive are the underbred airs and graces of the Magdalen

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on the right—I suppose she *is* the Magdalen—with her affected hand in its absurd pose, and her pretence at a kiss, which would be an insult to a corpse if really so given. It is difficult to say what makes the vast gulf between affectation like this and affectation like Perugino's; but a vast gulf there is, and we feel it instinctively. The one is naïve, simple, harmless, virginal; the other is conscious, obtrusive, meretricious, annoying. As to Bronzino's colour, that is always poverty-stricken, nowhere more so than in the faded National Gallery picture. I instance this work only as showing the final condemnation into which Florentine art fell in its later period.

The Pitti Palace contains at least three great pictures, more or less capable of being classed among Pietàs, and well worthy of comparison from our present standpoint. The most interesting is a really touching Perugino—in some respects his finest work—with far more emotion and earnestness in its treatment than is usual with that most placid and disconnected of Umbrian masters. The other two are by Fra Bartolommeo and Andrea del Sarto; they should be studied side by side, as examples of the purely pictorial composition and arrangement for effect of the later Renaissance, so different from the conventional proprieties and sacred symbolism of the Giottesque period.

IX

THAT GREAT PAINTER, IGNOTO

NEXT to "the poet Anon" the painter Ignoto has surely deserved best of humanity after the picked immortals. His works, in a surprising variety of styles, are to be found scattered through every gallery of Europe; and though every now and then one of them is claimed and vindicated for some mightier name, yet "Pictor Ignotus" has masterpieces enough still placed to his credit to deserve an ideal statue in Venice or Florence. In the first place, I am going to introduce you to one of his very minor performances—a dainty little St. Catherine in the National Gallery (Room VI., No. 646), there set down with official vagueness to the "Umbrian School" without further ascription. Nobody could call this a great or remarkable painting, though it has merits of its own as to tenderness of feeling and delicacy of colour: but it is interesting in its way as a local rendering of a theme which can be better followed out than any other perhaps within the walls of our British collection.

The St. Catherine forms one of a pendent pair of devotional pictures, originally, I take it, com-

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panion panels arranged in a triptych on either side of an Enthroned Madonna. The other picture of the pair is the graceful St. Ursula which hangs close by it; together they represent two virgin martyrs, the princesses of the Church — one Southern and Egyptian, St. Catherine of Alexandria; one Northern and British, St. Ursula of Cologne, the reputed daughter of a petty king in some English principality. I gather, therefore, that the original compound altar-piece, composed of a Madonna and Child, with two saintly princesses, was either offered as a votive picture or commissioned for her own private chapel by some Italian lady of rank in Umbria, most likely the daughter of a Duke of Urbino. In either picture the saint is accompanied by an attendant angel, and is sufficiently designated by her appropriate symbol, the palm as martyr being common to both, while the distinctive mark of the Catherine wheel denotes St. Catherine, as the emblematic arrow tells us at once that her companion is the arrow-smitten St. Ursula.

Let us look for a little at this placid and contemplative saint, a most typical Catherine; and then let us ask ourselves how much of her is due to original convention, common to all schools, and how much to Umbria or our own special Ignoto.

No sacred type is more fixed and more constant in early Italian art than the type of St. Catherine. If you wish to see how constant are the form and features of the Alexandrian princess, you need only



RAPHAEL

ST. CATHERINE: National Gallery, London.



ST. CATHERINE: National Gallery, London
UMBRIAN SCHOOL.

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go into the adjacent Lombard Room (see p. 196), where I would ask you to look at the beautiful and touching figure on the extreme left in Borgognone's exquisite altar-piece of the Madonna Enthroned with the two St. Catherines — those, I mean, of Alexandria and Siena. Borgognone's far lovelier and tenderer picture—to my mind one of the chief gems of our national collection—was painted, no doubt, at the Certosa di Pavia, far away from the hard blue hills and castled crags of Umbria. But in both alike you get the same general type of the saintly princess—soft, delicate, thoughtful, her rich golden hair covering her shoulder in the same flowing fashion, in unequal lengths, and held back from her high and ample forehead by a royal diadem. As the philosophic virgin martyr of the early Church, she is always represented by a fair and intellectual maiden; while her exalted rank permits the exuberant fancy of the painter to run riot in decoration on her regal robes. Here, in the handicraft of our unknown Umbrian master, she wears a wide-sleeved tunic of some bright green stuff, richly embroidered with a hem of gleaming gold thread, and daintily jewelled with Oriental magnificence on the square-cut edge of the delicate bodice. Over this royal robe is flung at the shoulders a darker crimson mantle. The colour scheme throughout is extremely bright, almost verging on crudity; but it is redeemed by the brilliancy and purity of its tints, which make it on the whole effective and pleasing.

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By the virgin martyr's side stand her familiar emblems, one or both of which you can discover for yourself, if you please, in more than twenty Italian pictures of all schools and ages, scattered up and down through the rooms of the gallery. With her left hand she grasps the wheel, set with huge sharp spikes, which was the instrument of her torture; in her right she holds the sword with which she suffered at last her final and definitive martyrdom; after which her body was conveyed by angels to a sarcophagus on Mount Sinai, as everybody has seen in the exquisite and touching fresco by Luini, now in the Brera at Milan. In many pictures, however, the wheel is shown, not whole, but broken into fragments; because it was so destroyed by an angel to terrify the executioners. Several other St. Catherines in the National Gallery, in fact—as for example, the Borgognone and the Carlo Crivelli (Room VIII., No. 724)—give one examples of the wheel, with its cruel curved spikes, of the selfsame pattern as in our nameless Umbrian; but the best known of all, the famous Raphael from the Aldobrandini Collection, has the spikes softened down to mere meaningless knobs, which have hardly even a symbolical and rather vague significance. Altogether, indeed, Raphael's treatment, though pictorially noble and beautiful, is ecclesiologically and historically a complete falling away from the charming conventional type of St. Catherine—a type endeared to the minds of mediæval Italians by hundreds of lovable and sympathetic embodiments.

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The angel by St. Catherine's side, in our Umbrian example, may not improbably represent the divine messenger sent to break in pieces the wheel of the executioners.

Now, if we compare this nameless St. Catherine with many others in the National Gallery, we shall soon be struck by the fact that it represents in a very high degree the simple and innocent pietism of the Umbrian painters. Both in this face and figure, and in the companion St. Ursula, we find a certain trustful and almost childish simplicity which more than redeems their decided lack of imaginative power. St. Catherine and her angel are of the primitive sort that knows no guile. And this innocent guilelessness is typically Umbrian. Among the citied hilltops of the soaring Apennines, alike at Siena and Perugia, art took a very different tone from that which it assumed in rich and cultivated Florence, in wealthy and commercial Venice. That spirit of ecstatic piety, of self-effacing absorption in the things of the soul, which found its final word in St. Francis of Assisi and St. Catherine of Siena, was common among the rapt Etruscan devotees of the central hills of Italy. All the art of the Apennines has therefore from the first that detached and studiously simple pietistic air which degenerates at last into an affected grace and a false sentimentalism with Perugino and Pinturicchio. Our nameless Umbrian catches this divine touch in its naïve and natural prime. What with Perugino is a studied pose is with him an

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outcome of pure and spontaneous spiritual personality.

Raphael's famous St. Catherine (Room VI., No. 168), of course, belongs to his Roman period. It has the roundness of form and perfection of modelling, the half-open lips and cultivated grace which mark that epoch in the mighty master's life. But, though instinct with nobility, and still striving hard after spiritual effect, it displays no longer the unaffected and natural holiness which belong as of right to the Madonna del Gran Duca of his Umbrian tutelage. I need hardly say it is a greater work of art by many stages than our Ignoto's little panel; but I confess, when I look at the one, I rather incline to be artistically critical; when I look at the other I incline only to say, "What an exquisite charm! What a delicious naïveté!"

There are several more St. Catherines in the National Gallery, which, viewed as single figures, it would be well for the visitor to compare as he passes with our unknown Umbrian's pretty embodiment. The Borgognone, which is most like it, is the most touching of all; it has the silvery tone and the exquisite feeling for individual character which make its painter one of the most charming among the schools of Lombardy. Then there is the Carlo Crivelli with its obtrusive wheel and its quaintly twisted fingers, a monument of the affected and contorted art of that grimace-loving creature, half Venetian, half Paduan. Walk from it straight into the Venetian Room and

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look there at the various representations of the same early type by the later painters of Venice, if you wish to see how the wealth and luxury of a mercantile city degraded the older spiritual conception of virgin martyrs into mere voluptuous and fair-haired ladies, taken direct from daughters of the princely merchant oligarchs of the Adriatic. There is a stately dame of opulent Titianesque charms, for example, in a Bonifazio Veronese (Room VII., No. 1202), of the Madonna and Saints, whom one recognises with surprise as a St. Catherine at last, not by her face or figure, which are those of a worldly belle of the later Renaissance, but by her broken wheel alone, aided by some dim and faint reminiscence of her wealth of hair. Another such lady, but of finer feeling, will be found in the Madonna and Child by Titian (Room VII., No. 635), where St. Catherine appears as a stately matron of some old aristocratic Venetian house, embracing the infant Christ with maternal fervour. Unless I greatly mistake, these two figures are each of them a portrait of some lady of the lagoons with her own first baby. Titian would have seen no irreverence in such an impersonation, which would have appeared to Fra Angelico the gravest sacrilege.

The visitor who goes carefully through the National Gallery with the object of tracing out the evolution of such separate figures will find a large number of St. Catherines of every age of Italian art, which will enable him to follow up the development of the type

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from the earliest period, and its gradual differentiation in the different schools. Sometimes he must be content to look for the martyred princess half lost among a number of throned and seated saints, as in the panel from the great altar-piece of Taddeo Gaddi's school, where a doubtful St. Catherine, recognisable rather by her luxuriant hair than by any definite emblem, sits in glory side by side with St. Ambrose, St. Stephen, St. Matthew, and several other assorted holy personages. Sometimes, as in the little predella by Fra Angelico in the Early Tuscan Room, she must be sought for diligently among a whole host of minute and carefully painted figures. Sometimes, as in the big Orcagna, she occupies a place of honour among the highest saints, well in the foreground. And sometimes, as in the glowing altar-piece by Moretto (Room VII., No. 625), she sits in glory on the sunlit clouds, where she receives the wedding-ring, as the spouse of Christ, from the baby hand of the infant Saviour. But if, from all these examples, the visitor forms a central conception of the typical St. Catherine, and then returns once more to our nameless Umbrian, accepting it as a special product of its time and place—the latter half of the fifteenth century among the Apennines of Urbino—he will be able to understand and criticise it far better than if he looks at it in isolation as a mere unrelated three-quarter-length figure of a saintly personage. That is the way to judge aright of these Italian works. So only will the spectator be able to estimate the

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saintly simplicity of the style, the infantile piety and purity of the feeling, the almost Flemish delicacy and roundness of face in the girlish angel. Painted a little smaller, this panel would have reminded us of the delicious Memlineks at Bruges; and indeed Memlinck, save for his smallness of scale, is a painter whose charming naïveté and graciousness not a little recall the Umbrian ideal. He is in the north what Buonfigli and Fiorenzo were in the Apennine hill-land. Strength and vigour, indeed, are not Umbrian characteristics; but for gentleness of touch, rapt ecstasy of piety, and sweetness of conception, the men of the mountains are unequalled in Italy.

X

OUR LADY OF FERRARA

THE three principal Ferrarese Madonnas in the National Gallery form a peculiarly interesting and valuable series, as illustrating the development of a single group or subject, in a single school, through three successive stages of artistic progress. As a rule, indeed, the rapid evolution of Italian art can only adequately be traced on Italian soil, where many consecutive treatments of the selfsame theme may be observed and compared in close proximity to one another. Fortune, however, has been kind to us with Our Lady of Ferrara: we possess in our own collection in Trafalgar Square no less than three of the finest presentments of the local Madonna of that decayed capital, each answering to an important and decisive moment in the growth and development of Ferrarese art.

Our earliest specimen of the three is that strange and at first sight somewhat repellent picture by Cosimo Tura (Room V., No. 772), the vigorous father of Ferrarese painting, whose crude and startling discords in red and green have no doubt astonished many an innocent visitor to the National Gallery. The curiously lurid effect of Cosimo's vivid colour, always conspicuous for its extraordinary abundance of bright



MADONNA ENTHRONED : *National Gallery, London.*
COSIMO TURA

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grass-greens, cannot, of course, be suggested by a black and white reproduction; but the quaint stiffness of his figures, the angularity of his drawing, the hard folds of his drapery, and the exaggerated, almost Chinese, obliquity of his eye-orbits are all well represented in the characteristic Madonna here set before us. I need hardly say that those who would study the picture aright must go to the original for its bold and eccentric colour; our little illustration only serves to recall the general effect of the work to those who have already made acquaintance at first hand with Cosimo's idiosyncrasy.

I would only call attention in passing here to three or four points in this interesting rather than beautiful picture. Notice first the peculiarly Mongolian and inexpressive face of the Madonna herself, with her almond eyes, and her broad round countenance—peculiarities observable in more than one of the angels who surround the throne, and especially in the two who are seated on the intermediate grade of steps, playing the guitar or mandoline. These features are common in the earlier works of the Ferrarese school, and even in Cossa. They merge with Lorenzo Costa into the Bolognese ideal. Observe, also, the quaintly contorted limbs of the Divine Child, twisted in that constrained way which always marks the first effort of nascent art towards variety of attitude and emotional expression. In trying to be alive, art at this stage habitually becomes vehement and unnatural. And do not forget to glance at some characteristic accessories: the highly

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decorated throne, the sunk panels of the arched ceiling, the Hebrew inscription on the niche at the back, the fruit and flowers so common in such works, but possessing here a certain unspeakable Ferrarese touch of difference. This ornate character of decoration was long retained by Ferrarese art ; and the architectural details in particular may be profitably compared with those many minor pictures in the same room of the Gallery.

The picture as a whole thus forms a good example of the elaborate treatment of the Madonna and Child which prevailed in the Bolognese and Ferrarese schools. The sharp folds of the drapery, on the other hand, betray at once the personal style of Cosimo Tura, who can always be recognised both by this peculiarity and by his singular and startling scheme of colouring. But the two little angels at the foot of the throne, engaged in playing the “regal” or portable organ, are sweeter than is usual with the creations of so rough and harsh a master. The one to the spectator’s left touches the keys of the instrument ; her companion to the right is represented with quaint naïveté as blowing the bellows. The panel originally constituted the central portion of an altar-piece, the lunette of which consisted of Cosimo’s well-known Pietà, now hung in the Louvre. Its decorative detail is well worthy of close study. I will call attention now to one point more only—the winged lion and bull, the eagle and angel who surmount the throne, symbols, as I need hardly say, of the four Evangelists.

The second enthroned Madonna of the Ferrarese

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school to which I would direct your notice is the far more beautiful picture by a little-known painter who rejoices in the somewhat awkwardly redundant name of Erecole di Giulio Cesare Grandi (Room V., No. 1119). I will not trouble you here with any particulars of the controversy which has raged, and still rages, round this problematical master's shadowy personality ; you will find as much as you care to know about the subject in the Official Catalogue and in Kugler's history. I am more concerned at present with the picture itself, which is one of the noblest and most satisfying works in our national collection. Its glow of colour immediately attracts the eye from a distance ; its exquisite composition and its beautiful painting impress one more and more the longer one looks at it.

The Madonna and Child sit enthroned in the centre under an arch with a panelled ceiling, which at once recalls Cosimo Tura's treatment. Minute comparison of these two similar arches and the capitals of their pilasters well repay the time spent upon them. But the Madonna's face and figure show an enormous advance in art during the short space of time that separates the painter from his predecessor Cosimo ; while the general arrangement of the figures may be profitably compared with the composition in Raphael's famous Blenheim Madonna. The two represent as nearly as possible corresponding moments in the evolution of style, the one in the Umbrian, the other in the Ferrarese school. Our Lady's face has in it a passing

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touch of Francia with a more marked reminiscence of Costa's style ; the Infant on her knees stands erect and benignant, admirably poised, and entirely naked : He holds out His right hand in the familiar attitude of priestly benediction. Observe in both these pictures the almost ungainly height of Our Lady's throne, characteristic of Venetian and Ferrarese devotion. On the Madonna's right (and the spectator's left) stands the youthful figure of St. William, in full knightly armour. This forms the most attractive and beautiful feature in the entire composition. Now, St. William, or San Guglielmo, is a great local saint at Ferrara, whom we shall meet once more in the neighbouring altar-piece by the sugary-sweet Garofalo (Room V., No. 671). A church and convent dedicated to him long existed in the town ; his figure therefore recurs frequently in Ferrarese pictures. Balancing him on the other side of the composition stands St. John the Baptist, holding his usual reed cross and the Book of Prophets. He should be specially compared with Raphael's St. John Baptist, in the Blenheim Madonna. The work as a whole thus represents, of course, the common subject of the Madonna enthroned, attended by the particular saints of the donor or church—a kind of group which forms the most frequent theme of art for Italian altar-pieces. This particular specimen is believed to have come from the church of the Concezione at Ferrara ; but it is worthy of remark that both the saints who appear in it had churches in the town, that of San Guglielmo being now secularised, while



MADONNA ENTHRONED WITH ST. WILLIAM AND ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST:
National Gallery, London. GRANDI

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that of San Giovanni Battista still exists in the sleepy little piazza which opens into the Corso di Porta Mare.

Of the rich decorative work lavished on every part of the picture I will not say much. The student should observe it for himself on the original panel. I will content myself with indicating what seems to be its historical meaning. The subject on the top, by the left side, I cannot confidently identify; I take it, however, to be "The Judgment of Solomon"; the subject on the right is, quite undeniably, "The Sacrifice of Isaac." The medallions in the spandrels of the arch represent the Annunciation, with the angel Gabriel, as usual, to the left, and the Madonna at her conventional prie-dieu to the right. The base of the throne has Adam and Eve in relief in ivory with the Tree of Knowledge, flanked on either side by the turbaned head of a Jewish prophet. Beneath, on the plinth, are subjects alternately in grisaille and colour, representing (from right to left), the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, the Massacre of the Innocents, the Flight into Egypt, and Christ Disputing with the Doctors in the Temple. As a whole this splendid work forms a worthy monument of the prevailing spirit of the Middle Renaissance; while the admirable drawing and perfect balance of the infant Christ might almost entitle it to rank with the finest work of Raphael. Nor would the pose of San Guglielmo do discredit to Giorgione, whose own exquisite St. George in the altar-piece at Castelfranco it distinctly recalls to us.

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The third of our Ferrarese pictures begins, it must be allowed, to herald the decline: it has no longer the simple force and charming sense of architectural symmetry which distinguish the *Ercole di Giulio Grandi*. It is an altar-piece by Garofalo, which originally occupied the place of honour above the high altar of the church of San Guglielmo in the grass-grown city. The centre of the picture is occupied, as usual, by the Madonna and Child—a Madonna in whom the somewhat insipid sweetness of the later Renaissance takes the place of the dignity, solemnity, and beauty of the greatest age. The saints at the side exhibit the true nature of the work at once as essentially a Franciscan altar-piece, intended for the decoration of a Franciscan conventional establishment. On the Madonna's right stand two somewhat realistic figures in coarse brown robes, whom we recognise at a glance as Franciscan friars, only too closely studied from life, and entirely wanting in ideality or inner saintliness of character. If one dare hint such a word, indeed, they look even a trifle greasy and grubby. An earlier age would have made their attributes clear to us; but Garofalo, learned in all the somewhat affected art of the Raphaelesque painters, takes care to reduce the symbols of the saints to the most inconspicuous relics. Close attention, however, will show that the friar on the right hand nearest to the throne bears marks of the stigmata on his hands and feet, which show him to be St. Francis of Assisi himself, the founder of our order; while the neighbouring friar

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with a lily in his hand, a little more in the background, is equally known for St. Antony of Padua, second in sanctity among canonised Franciscans. On the other side of the throne we get St. William himself, the patron saint of church and convent, in his armour as before—a graceful and dainty figure, but not to compare in strength and majesty with Ercole's splendid warrior. Behind him stands a nun in Franciscan robes, whom we know to be Santa Chiara, the companion of St. Francis and foundress of the Poor Clares, the female branch of the Franciscan society. All the characters in the picture are thus grouped together as the chief objects of devotion on the part of this particular Ferrarese convent.

It is impossible to look at this handsome work without recognising at once the immense advance in artistic technique which it displays, and the obvious traces of the influence of Raphael, but it is impossible also not to see that what was gained in art and knowledge was more than lost in power, freshness, and spirit. The work as a whole is tame and uninteresting; even the skill with which Garofalo has used the traditional greens of the Ferrarese school of colourists to relieve the prevailing browns of the Franciscan robes does not suffice to raise his work into the same high rank as Ercole's masterpiece. We cannot look at it without realising at a glance the beginnings of that sad and rapid decline which resulted so soon in the learned inanities and ineptitudes of the Carracci.

XI

THE PAINTERS' JORDAN

AMONG the earlier Italian works in the National Gallery few are more interesting than a certain composite altar-piece, vaguely described in the official catalogue as of the "School of Taddeo Gaddi," and representing in its central panel the familiar subject of the Baptism of Christ in Jordan (Vestibule, No. 579). The treatment, of course, is somewhat hard and dry, as one might expect from its age; and the figures have that early angularity which moves the uncouth mirth of uncultured visitors; but as a moment in the development of the theme which it enshrines it seems to me a precious relic in the evolution of the art of painting.

The centre of the foreground is occupied by a small and very symbolical Jordan—a Jordan reduced, as it were, to its simplest and most beggarly elements. There is only just enough of it, in fact, to enable us to say, as the children write across their first rude attempts, "This is a river." Such purely symbolical Jordans, like symbolical temples and symbolical cities, were common in the earlier ages of art; and, what is odder still, they survived from the days of Giotto and

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Taddeo Gaddi, almost down to the days of Raphael and Michael Angelo. You can see another admirable example of very late date in the charming and sympathetic Piero della Francesca of the same subject, also in the National Gallery, about which, as melodramatists put it, "more anon."

The right side of the picture—I speak here and always from the spectator's point of view—is occupied by a most rugged and realistic St. John Baptist, clothed in a long garment of camel's hair, which, however, the artist has generously concealed during part of its length by a flowing robe of more luxurious woven fabric. The middle of the panel is filled by the constrained figure of the Saviour, girt with a small loin cloth, and standing up to His knees in the symbolical river. On the right bank kneel two angels with towels, their faces intensely round and Giottesque, and their haloes displaying the usual frank solidity of the period. Two beetling crags, with extremely symmetrical trees, eke out the composition; above, the lightly sketched figure of the Eternal Father discharges a dove, representing the Holy Spirit, on the head of the Son with whom He is well pleased.

Now, this arrangement of the subject is conventional and formal, and it recurs again and again in the treatment of the Baptism from the earliest ages. As a rule, one finds on the extreme right of the picture the form of the Baptist; in the centre stands the Saviour, almost nude, in the symbolical river;

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and on the left we have one, two, or three angels holding a towel, according to the taste and fancy of the painter. Occasionally, it is true, especially in very early works, the sides are reversed, the Baptist occupying the left and the angels the right; but in the vast majority of Baptisms, during the great developmental age of Italian art (from Giotto to Raphael), the disposition is the same as in the "Altar-piece of the School of Taddeo Gaddi," and the treatment conforms, on the whole, to this typical instance.

The earlier history of the evolution of the type thus hardened into a convention by the fourteenth century is remarkable and interesting. The very first representations of the Baptism of Christ which we now possess are those which occur (as reliefs) on sarcophagi and (as mural paintings) on the walls of the Catacombs. A sarcophagus in the Lateran gives us, I believe, the most primitive realisation which has been noted of the historical scene; though still earlier allusions occur elsewhere in such symbolic forms as Noah in the Ark and the Passage of the Red Sea. In the relief on the Sarcophagus, however, a wavy line of almost Egyptian simplicity represents the Jordan, while a gigantic Baptist, clad in a loincloth of camel's skin, pours water from a bowl over the head of the Saviour. He is standing on the left, not, as is usual in later representations, on the right of the composition; but the attitude of the two chief persons, and especially the pose of the hand which

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holds the cup or bowl, is already that which was reproduced in later ages by numberless successive generations of artists. The "motive," as critics call it, was there from the beginning.

One point of difference exists, none the less, between this earliest Baptism and all later representations. There is as yet no trace of the angel. He makes his first appearance, so far as I have been able to observe, in the central mosaic of the cupola in the "Baptistery of the Orthodox," at Ravenna, a work which all modern critics assign to the fifth century. And he does so even there in a disguised form which curiously illustrates the transition from heathen to Christian art, and the way in which the conventional types of later ages were originally evolved from classical models. For the Ravenna mosaic, badly restored and much altered, still shows us a St. John with his jewelled cross on the left of the composition (left, not right, being the early usage), pouring water from a cup on the head of the Saviour, who occupies the middle of the work, and who stands, quite nude, up to his waist in the water of the river. The extreme right, however, is filled by a figure of the river-god of the Jordan, still represented quite frankly in the classical fashion. The age, indeed, saw as yet no incongruity in this intimate mixture of heathen and Christian conceptions. Genii and angels mingle with Job and Orpheus in picturesque confusion. The river-god has his head crowned with a wreath of water-weeds, and in his present form he holds a

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towel ; but this towel I take, for a reason which will be apparent hereafter, to be a bad bit of false restoration. Originally, I feel sure, he must have poured water from an urn at his side, as is usual with all other classical river deities. The urn and its stream of water were later mistaken, in the faded condition, for a cloth or towel; and so improperly represented by the ignorant restorer. The cross which St. John holds is also almost certainly a later addition, which gives colour to the idea of the substitution of a towel for the primitive water-urn.

But why do I suppose the river-god of the Jordan originally held an urn instead of a towel ? Well, for this reason. There is another most interesting mosaic at Ravenna, in another church, now commonly known as Santa Maria in Cosmedin, but originally built as the Baptistry of the Arians. This mosaic is a century later than that which decorates the Baptistry of the Orthodox ; for the round church whose ceiling it adorns was built after the capture of Ravenna by Theodoric and his Goths, who, of course, were Arians ; while the earlier Baptistry of the Orthodox was erected and decorated under the Emperor Honorius, who naturally belonged to the Catholic party. Now, the Arians were evidently anxious to have a Baptistry of their own, just as good and fine as that of the Orthodox ; so they not only imitated its shape but also decorated their ceiling with a counterpart mosaic of the Baptism of Christ, as nearly as possible after the fashion of its Catholic predecessor. The work-

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manship, indeed, as was natural in that age of rapid decadence, is far ruder than the beautiful handicraft of the fifth century ; but the composition is still approximately the same. Only, here the sides are reversed ; the Baptist stands on the right of the work, and the Jordan holds, not a towel, but an urn. As this is the older classical usage of river-gods, I feel sure that at the time when Italian workmen wrought this mosaic for the Gothic King, in close imitation of the Orthodox Baptistry, the Jordan in that earlier and finer composition must still have held an urn, and not a towel. I may add that the Christ in the Arian work is youthful and beardless, as is also the usage in the earliest representations in the Catacombs and on the antique sarcophagi ; while in the Orthodox mosaic he wears a beard, which I venture to believe is entirely due to later restoration. Certainly, the Arian work is older in type than the Orthodox in both these points, though later in the relative positions of the two chief actors ; and I can therefore hardly avoid the conclusion that these portions of the earlier mosaic have been subsequently restored by an incompetent artist, who followed rather the usage of his own time than the decayed and doubtful lines of the original.

If this conjecture be right, then a fresco of the seventh century in the catacomb of St. Pontianus gives us the one other needful transitional stage to the mediæval treatment. Here, as in the Gothic mosaic, the positions have reached the more familiar

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form with St. John on the right, while on the left bank stands an angel with a towel, a clear Christianisation of the half-pagan river-god of the Ravenna compositions. I gather that as the earlier representations grew dim, the god was mistaken for a Christian angel, and the water by his side for a linen fabric.

By the time of Taddeo Gaddi's follower, the single angel, again, had grown into a pair, and the dove, which occurs both in the Ravenna examples and in the Catacomb of St. Pontianus, was now launched direct from the visible hands of the Eternal Father. But in other respects, the treatment through the Middle Ages remained closely similar; and examples for verifying it are peculiarly numerous, since this scene was, and still continues to be, the favourite subject for decorating the walls or ceilings or altarpieces of baptisteries. Another good example, indeed, occurs in the National Gallery itself in the graceful though somewhat pallid picture by Piero della Francesca in the Umbrian room (Room VI., No. 665). Notice here the continued relative positions of the Saviour and St. John, the pose of the hand which holds the patera, and the angels, as usual, on the left bank. Only, observe that here they are increased to three; charming Umbrian angels, too, in open-mouthed devotion, whom you may well compare with the exquisite choir which hymns the Babe in Piero's "Nativity" close by, as well as with the endless singing angels who form so delicious and characteristic a feature in the paintings by Buonfigli and other

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Umbrians of his age in the Pinacoteca at Perugia. Look, in passing, also at the increased taste for landscape, which makes Piero substitute two or three well-painted trees on right and left for the symmetrical and purely symbolical bushes of Taddeo Gaddi's follower. Lastly, note how the increasing love of the Renaissance for the representation of the nude exhibits itself frankly in the figure of the man in the background, disrobing himself for baptism, and introduced for no other purpose than in order that the artist may show his technical mastery of anatomical drawing. Visitors to Florence will recollect the similar and famous instance of the young man on the walls of the Brancacci Chapel.

I may add that while classical boldness represented the figure of the Saviour entirely nude, the growing reverence of later days supplied him with a loincloth ; but recouped itself, as it were, for this artistic sacrifice by frequently introducing other nude figures of penitents in the background.

The most celebrated representation of this frequent theme, however, is undoubtedly Andrea Verrocchio's calm and majestic masterpiece, originally painted for the convent of St. Salvi, and now in the Accademia delle Belle Arti at Florence. This is a picture which every visitor to Italy has admired, but which can only be really and fully understood by just this kind of comparison with other treatments of the theme by earlier artists. A noble and ascetic St. John, stern, lean, and full of desert character, stands in an attitude

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directly reminiscent of earlier usage, yet, oh, how much richer in life and movement! Cup and posture are the same, but life has been breathed into them. The Christ, though sombre and severe, more like a poverty-stricken Tuscan peasant than the ideal of Christendom, is yet nobly conceived; while the two attendant angels, loveliest among the angelic figures of the Florentine school, are so daintily beautiful that legend will have it the more graceful of the two was added surreptitiously to the master's work by the pencil of his great pupil, Leonardo da Vinci. And, indeed, even to a technical eye, there are signs about it of a still greater hand than that which drew the austere and characteristic Baptist. I would ask all my readers when they go again to Florence to look once more at this glorious work of a painter who has left us far too little, by the light of the comparative method which I have here endeavoured to focus slightly upon its theme and its antecedents.

CONCLUSION

AND now I close this brief and imperfect retrospect. As my work has gone on I have felt increasingly from time to time how much less I could do for it than I had designed or hoped ; how difficult it is to express one's ideas clearly in any other way save by taking the reader round with one in the body from gallery to gallery, and there pointing out to him what strikes one most before the original pictures in long succession. Nevertheless, I trust I have succeeded, however feebly, in suggesting a new point of view for early Italian painting. The point of view is not indeed of the sort familiar to artists ; yet even the artist will perhaps admit that it is calculated to make the outside observer look closer at works of art, and so to lead him on to higher appreciation of their technical and aesthetic aspects. Moreover, it suggests a method of comparison. I have tried to make my readers feel that no one work can be fairly or adequately judged by itself alone, nor even as a specimen of a particular school and a particular master. It must also be regarded as one of a long progressive series,—an “Annunciation,” a “Pietà,” a “Marriage of St. Catherine,” a

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“Martyrdom of St. Sebastian,” a “Resurrection,” an “Assumption,” as the case may be—and it must be duly considered with reference to all the other pictures on the same theme that preceded or succeeded it. Even as a work of art it can never be completely understood in isolation. It falls into rank as one of a great family, a moment in a long line of historical development; and as such we must regard it, throwing ourselves back into the mental attitude of the men of its time, if we wish to judge rightly of its æsthetic, its evolutionary, and its doctrinal importance.

To sum up briefly, then, I would say in one paragraph that, from the standpoint of the evolutionist, we should regard any given early Italian work, not primarily as a Raphael, a Giotto, or an Orcagna, but primarily as a “Paradiso,” a “Nativity,” a “St. Francis Receiving the Stigmata,” a “Doge Presented by St. Mark to the Madonna.” We should mentally restore it to its proper order in the historical or evolutionary series, and should proceed to observe what traits it borrows from earlier treatments, what elements it foreshadows in later pictures. Then we should look at it as a specimen of its own genus as specially developed by such and such a school, and as conditioned by the general advance of art at such and such a period. After that we may consider it, if we will, from the side of the new connoisseurship (to which I do not in the remotest way pretend), as showing such and such minute and technical signs of proceeding from the hands of such

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and such a particular master. We may note the touches which mark it off for us as a Buonfigli, not a Fiorenzo di Lorenzo; which discriminate it as a Bissolo from a Pasqualino or a Giovanni Bellini. But more important for our purpose to the general student will be the recognition of the spirit and feeling of the special master, which is often successfully transmitted to pupils whom connoisseurship infallibly and instantly recognises by small traits of difference. Then again we must discover in each great theme, not only the influence of the original tradition, as modified by time, by place, by individuality, but also the influence of purpose and medium, of patron and position. For example, there is often a treatment proper for fresco; another for panel, tabernacle, or altar-piece; a third for miniature or decorative objects. One style is used for tempera and one for oil painting. Not infrequently we get various types of treatment, conditioned by shape—the square, the tall or upright oblong, the broad or shadow oblong, the circular or *tondo*, the lunette, the round arch, the pointed niche, the triangular or polygonal space above a doorway. Then there is the variety of final purpose: the austere and ascetic type which suits the cloister or the monastery; the more joyous and decorative style adapted to church or altar-piece; the regal and ornamental method for the rich man's palace. Thus even saints have often two distinct types; the one severe and sober-hued, when they stand for objects of religious veneration; the

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other ornate and many-hued, when they stand as patrons and representatives of some princely family.

But I will say no more. My main object has been to show that each picture must be viewed as a particular variant on a central type; my second to show that the variations themselves follow fixed laws of development, and are due in part to a general stream of human evolution, in part to differentiation under the influence of the local or personal environment. I leave the reader to fill in for himself the outline I have here endeavoured to sketch; and I can have no better reward for my uncertain toil than to find that I have induced some other to take up with me this interesting study on the lines I have suggested from my own slight knowledge. If any man objects that such a method is not study of Art, I can only answer, "Perhaps not—but it is a study of Evolution."

THE END

